

BEARING THE CROSS

Volume 1

Cellblocks 118 & 109

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Chapter I

The Beginning of Sorrows

The banging of a steel rod against the sealed steel door created such a racket that it commanded John's attention. Even though it was coming from another block, perhaps 200 meters away, it was so loud that it drowned out all other sounds except the blood-curdling screams of the next victims, "Don't do it! Please stop!"

All anyone could do from inside his cell was listen to the vain cries for mercy during the final seconds of their lives. Usually, a steel rod is used to get the night guard's attention to flip the circuit breaker that is routinely tripped by more than one inmate per floor using high-amperage cooking or heating devices. Lights and battery chargers alone would not do it. But about one out of ten times, the steel rod—accompanied by abusive yelling—is employed to alert the guard that someone is ill—albeit often feigned in order for the inmate to find a way to be let out of his hellish existence (and cigarette- or drug-filled air) for a few minutes. About ten percent of those calls for medical care involve a prisoner who is dying or already dead. They are normally killed in Chilean prisons by crudely manufactured spears, using sharpened steel broken off of triple-bunk beds or other fixtures and attached to a broom handle.

Sergio, who had been imprisoned for a couple of years already, commented to John, "Human life has such little value here." The night guard never hurries to get to the cell of the sick or dying man, first because most calls are false alarms, but second, because there is a shortage of personnel and one late-afternoon-evening-night guard, or *gendarme*, has to look after at least three blocks, or *módulos*, each containing anywhere from fifty to three hundred fifty prisoners, or *reos*. When he discovers that someone is really dying, by the time he gets there and drags the victim to the paramedic, the poor *reo* will likely have bled-out and died.

The next day, John was still affected by what he had heard. It occurred during his first few weeks in the Valparaíso penitentiary; others, like Miami (whose real name was Miguel, serving six years and eight months after being wrongly convicted, he said, of sexually abusing a child), took it in stride. On average, eight *reos* are murdered per year, although at least one is stabbed seriously every week. In Santiago prisons, the figure is higher, but regional prisons have fewer deaths and serious injuries from violence. Miami continued, "That's especially true in concessioned (private) prisons where maximum capacity is seldom exceeded." For instance, according to Ismael, who spent eight years in the concessioned prison in Antofagasta, there are only 200 prisoners there since it is run privately, and normally there are only two *reos* housed per cell. By contrast, in Valparaíso's state-run prison, there are about 3,000 *reos*, and in most *módulos*, seven to ten (or more) *reos* *reos* meter × 3-meter cells or (if they are lucky) 3-meter × 3-meter ones. No more than six beds—really racks or *parrillas*—can be put into a cell, and one can even be put in the 40 centimeters of space above the shower stall. Most cells do not have shower stalls or working showers since the water is often cut. In some *módulos*, men defecate in bags and throw them out of the windows into the yard since the toilet bowl is stripped out underneath and used to hide cell phones and other valuables (where guards will not check), rendering those fixtures unusable. Of course, no one tolerates stinking excrement or urine in the cell, especially for those without beds who have to throw a foam mattress on the floor. Indeed, such offenses could easily get one stabbed. While killing a guard carries serious consequences, killing another

reo in a fight results in the extension of a man's sentence by 18 months (typically). For those serving 20 years or more, the penalty is hardly a deterrent.

That's why John, an American or *gringo*, who had been a resident or citizen of Chile for over 24 years, was put into *módulo* 118 while awaiting trial. That *módulo* is reserved for former guards, cops, or military men, and some high-profile people. Also, *mozos* (inmates assigned daily slave labor) or some convicts with good conduct, or those needing extra security, were placed in 118 when there was room. John became the poster-child of Chilean communists and other leftists after hours of selective media coverage of him shooting dissuasively (meaning a warning shot fired at the ground to scare them off) at a mob of violent leftists that assailed him. He would have been killed in most other *módulos* as the "damned *gringo* who kills Chileans." In fact, John killed no one, but he did shoot four of the twenty .40 caliber rounds he had in his two clips, all aimed toward the ground near his assailants. His Sig Sauer model P226 pistol was legally registered, and he had a license to carry it in his pickup truck. One bullet's ricochet hit an assailant in the thigh; another's ricochet apparently hit an occupied but parked car's radiator and gearbox.

While *módulo* 118 may be bad, many fellow *reos* told John that he is far better off than he would be in other *módulos*. No one in 118 gets stabbed, for instance, and there are only three or four dozen *reos* housed there. Many are *mozos* and thus do not go out into the yard, leaving under a dozen men socializing together most days. Other *módulos* have up to 300 men in the yard and many bellicose factions. About one-third in 118 are former uniformed men, who have to be kept separate from the general population lest they be beaten or killed. Nevertheless, if they misbehave in 118, they can still be put over to the other side—and several have been, said Miami (maybe one such man every year or two). A good chunk of the remaining *reos* are either convicted or awaiting trial for sexual abuse or rape—usually of children. The others are an assortment of drug traffickers, murderers, one habitual drunk, thieves, or men who violated some gun policy: firing in public without justification, shooting with "disproportionate force" at bandits who only had knives, or carrying a gun with the serial number filed off or without a license to do so. There are a few others with more specialized crimes: a tax cheat, a robber, and destroyer of court facilities, a seller of political influence, and a launderer of drug money.

At least 118 has a concrete yard. Of the eighteen *módulos*, only 118 and 107 (maximum security) have concrete yards, unless one also counts 117 as a *módulo* (the psychiatric ward). The rest are dirt. And 118 uniquely has some plants and a male avocado tree in its yard (the female is in the yard for 114 three meters above; so those *reos* get the avocados. In every *módulo*, all *reos* who do not work as slaves (*mozos*) cleaning parts of the prison (for instance, the small infirmary or paramedic station, administrative offices, kitchen, etc.) or storing, preparing, or delivering stove-top barrels or trays of food for the *reos*, have to present themselves around 9 a.m. in formation, a lineup, and count off for the *gendarme* in charge. Those with caps, sandals, tanktops, a cigarette in their mouth, or with hands in their pockets during the lineup are sternly rebuked by the *gendarme*. Afterward, *reos* can change clothes and shoes, plus wear sunglasses, caps, and sandals in warm weather. There is no changing room and only one tiny bathroom. So during the southern summer, John, like others, changed in the dining room.

Exercise is another problem. There are some makeshift weights in 118. John used the bench press and did fairly well with it for a man of 57. He also fast-walked first thing (before the lineup

formed usually), pacing the length of the yard 40 times every day: 19 steps each way, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ kilometer. Other *reos* walked it too, albeit more slowly, at different times of the day. Other than occasionally (once or twice a week) walking up to the visitation hall outside the *módulo*—and only about one-half of 118's *reos* had visitors—there was no other exercise, except for when permission was granted for some *reos* to go play baby soccer in a concrete court the size of a rural high school basketball arena. Except for 107, which only allows 90 minutes of being in the yard, *reos* stay outside or in the dining hall until 3 p.m. or 4 p.m.

For those with willing wives or steady girlfriends who regularly visit for at least six months, one three-hour conjugal visit can be applied for per month (except during quarantine situations). One has to jump through lots of hurdles to achieve this visit, filling out a form with the social assistant and the wife arranging with the coordinator the day of the month and time, also turning in their marriage license or proof of regular, stable relationship. In Valparaíso, accused and convicted men have this "right." In other prisons, like La Serena and Puerto Montt, only convicts do, according to lawyer Fabiola Garcia (but John heard that the Right to conjugal visits is now system-wide. All the wives, 10 to 15 at a time in Valparaíso, must arrive on time and enter their assigned 2-meter \times 3-meter rooms with her waiting man. Otherwise, they do not get in. They can bring nothing with them either. Sheets, pillows, bedspreads, shampoo, lotions all have to be brought in after obtaining special written permission during regular visitation. Then the *reo* has to prepare the conjugal cell before she arrives. There is a black market for condoms or other useful elements sold outside the conjugal cells. The bed is a twin, what they call *plaza y media* in Chile. But the cell has a shower with hot water, although John could not get any his first time, which is the only warm shower the *reo* has all month.

Sergio had shown John that mixing cold water in an empty paint bucket 50/50 with water boiled in an electric coffee/tea kettle allowed *reos* to use a cup and pour warm water over themselves instead. It is hardly a replacement for a real shower, though. So the conjugal cell's shower is a real luxury for a *reo*. Some *reos* start families or add new children through conjugal visits, such as Aníbal, who is the *mozo* or administrative assistant/slave of 118, serving a 25-year sentence and hoping to be out in 16.

All told, exercise opportunities, for some a little more and for others a little less, are hardly abundant in 118. Other than the very few who spend their *patio* or yard time playing chess, like John, Rubén, Ismael, and a few others on occasion—especially short-term prisoners *en tránsito* who are waiting to be "classified" into the general population *módulos*. Most of his games were with Rubén, who had never played before meeting John. Others picked up pointers as well. Thus, John ended up being a chess teacher, coach, and opponent. After four months, perhaps unremarkably, John's record stood at 624 wins, 34 losses, and 8 stalemates. After nearly seven months, it was 909-57-12. Most other men played card games, *damas* (similar to checkers), or gambled with small sums with dominoes, cards, or a casino game called *Punta y Banca*.

Many men in 118 crafted ships, birds, dolphins, planes, jeeps, or carts out of wooden crates purchased from the guards or others for 2,000 to 8,000 pesos (about USD2.50 to USD10). Besides 101 and 103—the *módulo* with *hermanos* (evangelicals, usually Pentecostal, brethren)—only 118 had hand and some power tools available to form the wooden objects. They also bought varnish, nails, screws, sandpaper, and other supplies. In the end, the items are sold to wholesalers who, in turn, sell them in open-air markets in the *región* or are sold or raffled-off internally.

Some of the more elaborate Spanish or Viking sailing ships, with sails, ropes, and other details like railings, barrels, treasure chests—along with a button to open a secret compartment—sell for as much as 80,000 pesos (about USD100). Birds (like *garzas*), or dolphins, by contrast, only fetch 10,000 to 15,000 pesos. A few men use their *patio* time to do legal research or write books. Some read, too, although this activity is more common during hours of confinement when one is bored watching TV or pirated movies smuggled in on pen drives by visiting lawyers or corrupt *gendarmes*, which the great majority are, according to Miami.

Indeed, the main attraction of visitation is that each visitor can give up to 50,000 pesos (about USD58) to a *reo*, who, in turn, will spend money on those who wash clothes for them or even clean their cells on some uncommon occasions. They can also buy almonds, walnuts, eggs, and other foods that the *gendarmes* bring in and sell for double or triple the market price outside. The same is true for 1.5-liter bottles of Coca-Cola, Sprite, or Crush, as well as padded prices paid to send a sycophant *reo* to the prison's storeroom or kiosk (*bodega*) to buy juice, cheese, lunch meat, cookies, and chocolate. The *mozo* collects the money and buys the goods. The profits are later discreetly given to the *gendarme*, who notoriously carries a wad of cash.

Special cell privileges can also be obtained by such indirect payments. A person like Raúl (older) who had money and wanted to live alone, paid 15,000 pesos (about USD18) twice a month to *mozo* Aníbal or his helpers. Those who lived alone on the top (4th) floor enjoyed wooden or tiled floors, painted walls with pictures hung, and a good TV reception system. They paid the *mozo* 50,000 to 100,000 pesos monthly. Long-term *reos* figure that a shrewd *gendarme*—who would never admit that any of this actually occurs—can at least double his salary with undeclared cash. But the *reos* seldom complain about such corruption among friendly and helpful guards. If one pays, he can get privileges. Those who have no money but help the *gendarme* can also benefit. All get good conduct reports and are thus protected from being kicked out of 118 to the general population, and can apply for benefits like Sundays or weekends at home after completing at least one-third of their sentence. Moreover, such activity is hardly restricted to 118. It occurs in all *módulos* and in all Chilean prisons. Like the Bible says, “money answers everything” (Ecclesiastes 10:19). Prisoners can live a little better, and guards end up having one of the best-paid positions available.

At times, even getting meat in the daily grub or being taken to the prison doctor or nurse requires a tip. For an Evangelical, and once Baptist pastor, like John, the system in Chilean prisons was startling, although his advanced training in economics and public policy had provided theoretical reasons why such would be expected. It is said that for the right price, anything can be bought in prison. Cell phones, which are prohibited, regularly enter through rented vaginas (the *gendarmes* are not allowed to perform cavity searches due to human rights concerns) or brazen *gendarmes* or lawyers. Prostitutes also pay visits, and sheets are used to set up sexual “quickie” stalls for a very high price in visiting areas on occasion. The *gendarmes'* cameras go unmonitored for a few moments, apparently. Such extravagance is often financed by drug money or extra cash smuggled in by visitors, even though all visitors are subject to a strip search and goods inspected for drugs.

John pondered the situation and thought to himself, “There is nothing surprising going on here. It is the nature of the state to produce such activity or corruption, and it happens all over the world, not just in Chile. More than any disease or natural disaster, nothing in history has been more

lethal to people than the state. It is man's chief enemy in all ages. Only those cleaving to some antiquated, romantic, yet fictitious notion that state actors serve the public interest primarily, instead of their own, could ever think otherwise. The evidence added by seeing what goes on in 118, and hearing testimony about other *módulos* was overwhelming."

Chapter II

And Such Were Some of You

This book is not fiction. All the acts and events are true, real life. Only prisoners' real first names are used unless those involved specifically granted their permission to use their last names. The first and last names of lawyers, prison guards, and other public "servants" mentioned are real and accurate. The men in 118 seemed to be rather normal on the surface, especially if they spoke well in Spanish, composed of a mixture of virtues and vices. Some were guilty of the most heinous crimes, other lesser ones, and a few were innocent and thus suffering wrongfully. Some were tall; some were short; some were skinny, some were fat; almost all of them had interesting stories to tell about their lives and the events leading to them being accused or convicted of committing a crime. Several of them were likely unjustly convicted by a horrendous Chilean justice system.

Juan Pablo, also known in 118 as *Che* (or *Argentino Culiado*, meaning f^*#ing Argentine), was 43 years old, a heavy smoker, from the center-right politically. At one point in his early life, he was religious (a Roman Catholic), entering seminary under the influence of his aunt. He then became an agnostic, developing a curious self-made religion having to do with energy fields. He worked as a restaurant helper. He was quite muscular for his short stature and worked out regularly—even helping other men train. His speech quality was good. He had traveled in Argentina and speech quality was good. He had traveled in Argentina and year-old daughter was killed in a bus crash high in the Andes while on her way to see him.

Rubén (*guatón*) was 59 years old, from the centerright politically, and was accused and convicted for sexual abuse of two young women, whom he says lied in court. He claimed to be innocent. He was a retired public employee, having worked thirty years in public service and reaching its highest rank. He was sentenced to six years and could be eligible for parole in four. He was quite fat. He had visitors regularly, just like John and others did, unlike *Che* and several others who never did. He was a nominal Roman Catholic but had no problem taking communion with Evangelicals. He had good-quality speech but had not traveled much, not even within Chile. He could never imagine moving to another country and leaving his family. He had been separated for many years from his wife yet would not offer her divorce lest she lose her medical benefits. The two remained friends, and she visited him in prison, but his eyes were for other women. He suffered from diabetes and hypertension, wore reading glasses, and did not smoke.

Miguel Correa Navarrete (Miami) was 63 years old, from the center-right politically, and was in good shape. He was accused of sexually abusing a child (one of his relatives), for which he said he was innocent. He was fairly well educated as a naval aviator and quite good and skilled as a pilot. American aviators were quite impressed with his skills. He also had a local bus and trucking company in Chile, running 65 vehicles. He was sentenced to eight years in prison, eligible for parole 6 $\frac{2}{3}$, not sooner because he was unwilling to accept or admit guilt. He had traveled widely (while in the Chilean Navy) to the United States, Europe, most of South America, and some other countries. He did not smoke, but he did have diabetes and needed reading glasses. He also had serious dental problems with all of his teeth separated and many missing. They would all have to be replaced one day, completely. Miami was one of the most trustworthy and helpful inmates in prison, making one tend not to doubt his innocence. As a

Roman Catholic, he believed he would be rewarded by practicing good works and showing love and benevolence to his neighbor, particularly newcomers and sick or handicapped inmates. He enjoyed working incessantly on the *patio* to make the time pass more quickly.

Roberto (bald) was a 46-year-old ex-policeman convicted of theft. He called himself a criminal, and no one doubted it. He was intelligent but sly and quite mendacious. Politically he was from the center-right, had one year of education past high school, and was physically fit. He had no visitors, however, and his religion was in a seminal stage, interested in Christianity but not practicing it, although valuing the social institutions that that religion generated. His quality of speech was good, and he had no health problems other than being a drug addict, although in recent times the only drug he was using was marijuana. Otherwise, he did not smoke.

Raul (the elder) was a 70-year-old man who was accused (and certainly guilty) of shooting and killing the mother of his then seven-year-old daughter while on her school grounds. There was no doubt that he would be convicted of first-degree murder. The act was caught on video surveillance footage, and Raúl did not deny his guilt, fully cooperating with the police. He lost his cool because the mother, his former housemaid, was refusing to let him see his daughter. He was a retired businessman with considerable assets, gained from the sale of his pizza businesses in the United States. He was from the political left and a bit overweight. He did have visitors, including a neighbor and his sister. His quality of speech was very good. He was an atheist and well educated through his avid personal reading and travel, rather than education in a formal sense. His travel was as extensive, perhaps as Miami and John's. He smoked prolifically and suffered from diabetes.

Roberto (*Viejo Chico*) was a scrawny, 53-year-old drunk who had been caught one too many times driving while intoxicated. He was quite stupid, with a hideous and irritating witch-like laugh. He did not even finish the fourth grade. He was thus nearly illiterate, with a disproportionately big mouth for being so short and thin, a bad characteristic that at times had led other men to punch him. He was stuck in prison for two years. He did have visitors, and he did not smoke. His Spanish speech quality was terrible, and foreign-born people like John had little chance of understanding him. His inability to do simple mathematics while playing cards was evident as well. He could not see how seven plus five was twelve, for instance, and angrily argued with those who did, accusing them of trying to cheat him.

Alexander was a 22-year-old man accused of rape. He had worked as a security guard for three years, had a normal body style, was a Pentecostal Christian, and had very poor speaking ability in his own (Spanish) language. He did not smoke.

Diego was a 21-year-old man and ex-policeman who was accused of robbing a service station convenience store while under the influence of drugs. He said he took pills to get high prior to the event. He was very fit, quite strong in fact, and he was from the political Right. He knew many of the people that John knew, for instance, who were from the far-right or libertarians and was willing to take action if necessary to defend Chile against communists and other predators. His speech quality was good, and he even knew a few English words and phrases. The only other English speaker was Raúl (the elder) who had lived in the United States (mostly in Spanish-speaking boroughs of New York City and Miami) and could speak English a little bit but was by no means fluent. Diego smoked considerably, but he had no medical issues. He nearly always

hung out with the younger crowd while on the *patio* area.

Ismael Castro Castillo, age 35, said he had no political allegiance and was convicted of murdering his girlfriend. He was an ex-policeman and was quite fit and strong, sentenced to twenty years with the hope of getting paroled after serving fourteen of them in 2025. He was in the northern coastal city of Antofagasta's prison for many years and was finally allowed to transfer to Valparaiso so that he could be closer to his family in Santiago, who now could more easily visit him (the drive was only 90 minutes). He was a professing Evangelical with fair speech quality. He had no health issues and did not smoke.

Helmut, age 40, from the center-right politically and an ex-military man, was convicted for cheating on his taxes. He was quite fit and strong and was serving a four-year sentence. He had visitors regularly, and his quality of speech was good. He did not smoke.

José was a 30-year-old ex-cop accused of violent intimidation and attempted murder. His body style was normal to strong, and he was a Roman Catholic. He had visitors. Unfortunately, his quality of Spanish was quite poor and hard for foreigners to understand. He did not smoke and had no health problems.

Mauricio, age 45, was in the entertainment business prior to being accused and convicted of raping a child, his niece. He claimed to be innocent. He was from the political center, although he mistakenly believed that he was rightwing, formerly being a sailor for several years. He was a Mormon, although not a practicing one, who had been on a mission in Bolivia. He was a bit chubby but used to be quite fat, having lost considerable weight while in prison. Condemned for six years, he hoped to be paroled in three. His quality of speech was good, and he wore glasses like John, *Pato*, and Sergio. He had done some travel in Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina, and he rarely smoked, although he did have some problems with hypertension and other maladies.

Carlos (*Carlito* or *enano* [midget]) was a 36-year-old man accused of having mutual oral sex with his eight-year-old daughter. He also recorded the sexual act on video. John's shoulder stood four inches above this little man's head. (John was 6 feet 3 inches tall.) Carlos was chubby and an ex-Navy man, quite skilled in mapmaking and other technical trades, as well as working with electricity and some other construction trades. He had a pension from the Chilean Navy. Although quiet, he was a slightly proud, know-it-all type, acting as an authority even on matters out of his league. Yet he was of a quiet and friendly demeanor in general, but a stickler for rules. He had no visitors, his quality of speech was good, and he did not smoke, nor did he have any medical issues.

Karim, age 31, was a politician, self-proclaimed to be from the extreme Right in Chile (*Renovación Nacional* party), and was a *concejal* or local watchdog (an entry-level politician). He was accused of many things, including theft, aiding and abetting thieves, drug trafficking, and trafficking in political influence. He had had a difficult time in school, constantly being kicked out for wayward behavior when he was young and completed no college education, although he did have knowledge about some academic topics. John offered to lend him his book on economics one time, and he refused to take it because he was obviously not a reader. He was an atheist, formerly of Palestinian Eastern Orthodox persuasion by upbringing, a playboy, and had many visitors. His speech quality tended to be quite good, but not always by any means. He

could talk prisoners' lingo and seemed to enjoy doing so in order to fit in. He had traveled to the United States and elsewhere. He was taller than everyone except John and did not smoke.

Raul (the younger) was a 44-year-old drug trafficker from the political center-left. He had been condemned to prison for ten years after repeated counts of drug- and firearms-related crimes. He was quite fat, believed in God, and even came close to being an Evangelical. His speech quality was good. He seldom had a visitor, but a girlfriend would come to see him a few times a year. He had sleep apnea, which was a difficult health problem for him. His need for a reliable electricity source got him moved from the general population to 118. He slept with a special machine all night in 118, which bothered anyone who happened to be his cellmate (which was Sergio for over a year and then Marcelo for some months afterward). He did not smoke. He said that dealing drugs was the only way he could provide for his family.

Aníbal was a 30-year-old man who had robbed and destroyed the courthouse. He had political tendencies towards the center-left or left and was a semi-illiterate thin man sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. He had regular visitors, including small children. Remarkably, through his conjugal visits, he and his partner had engendered several children. His speech quality was very poor and, thus, hard to understand. He had not traveled, but smoked ravenously, and had serious health problems resulting in coughing due to, not surprisingly, respiratory ailments.

Manuel was a 37-year-old ex-gendarme, jailed for six years for defending his father and himself against a group of knife-wielding assailants, some of whom had stabbed him. He was innocent before God but guilty under insane Chilean public policy that forbids disproportional defense, which occurred when Manuel shot and wounded several of the scoundrels. Manuel struggled with some mental disorders, evident to all in 118, and especially those who had the misfortune of living under his unmedicated obsessive-compulsive tyranny. He was a nice man during his manic phase and a loyal father of three, hoping to do the right thing and marry their mother once released from prison. He was in good shape, although not particularly strong, and always willing to pick a fight or be involved in one. He detested communists, rule-breakers, and criminals who destroyed property and injured innocent people in Chile. He despised child rapists, especially, along with any man who did violence to women. He was interested in varieties of the Christian religion but practiced little of it. He liked following the rules generally but was able to wipe away any recollection of lies or theft that he participated in. He could thus do wrong and still maintain a clear conscience about his self-proclaimed righteousness as a champion of traditional values and truth. He was opinionated, albeit uneducated. He was an expert only at cleaning and hitting people, yet he sought to teach others about subjects he knew little about. Thus, he was a sad mixture of virtue and unrecognized vice. He had not traveled and never read books or articles. He had problems with his back and eyesight but did not smoke. His Spanish quality was good except when he spoke fast and lost clarity. His family visited him regularly.

Franco was a 28-year-old ex-cop with a chubby body style, who was in prison for five years after being convicted for drug trafficking. He mostly lived with Aníbal, although he at first lived with Patricio (bald), an ex-sailor, and a *mozo* in his forties who worked in the *gendarmería* statistical office. *Pato* was thus infrequently seen in 118's *patio* but was frequently encountered by fellow prisoners when passing through the staging area on their way to the courthouse. Franco did have visitors. His quality of speech was good, and he often tried to sell things to others, ranging from eggs to handcrafted wooden model Viking ships. He smoked but had no health problems.

Sergio (*Chuncoco*) was a 42-year-old ex-Navy man from the political center-right accused and convicted of sexually molesting his teenage stepdaughter. He claimed to have traveled widely, although Mauricio doubted that claim. He was quite fat. He smoked a lot and had problems with his artificial stomach after cancer surgery and other maladies. He was trained in the Chilean Navy to be a nurse and also learned other technical trades. Mauricio (and perhaps others) considered him to be a pathological liar, although he was well-liked. He had considerable religious training as a Roman Catholic but also appreciated Evangelicals, even though he was highly attracted to atheism since God did not help him when in need. He claimed to be innocent and thus obviously worthy of divine intervention. His Spanish quality was good, and he had no visitors since his family lived so far south. He had to wear glasses.

Ricardo Lira Céspedes, age 28, was convicted of stabbing and killing his friend unintentionally, manslaughter, and was serving eight years in prison. He was quite fat but without health problems. He enjoyed reading and had an interest in either evangelical or Roman Catholic religion, although he practiced neither one. He was opinionated yet largely ignorant and was the type of man who would follow the crowd. He seemed remarkably immature for his age but was generally amiable and affable, other than the fact that he always watched what others were doing, making them uneasy at times. The quality of his Spanish language was fair and somewhat difficult for foreigners to grasp. He smoked, although not excessively, and did have visitors, mainly his family.

Waldo was a 26-year-old ex-cop from the political center-right. He had threatened to kill the guy who was molesting his child and was caught with a gun in his car that had the serial number filed off. He faced many years in jail for those “crimes.” He was chubby, and his quality of speech was poor. He was formerly a Pentecostal Christian but no longer practiced that religion. He had visitors, did not smoke, and had no health problems.

Pedro (Lorenzo) was a 57-year-old man accused of threatening to kill another man. He was quite overweight, if not fat, and had no visitors. (He had one brother in La Serena who could never make the four-hour drive down.) He was interested in the Christian religion and Evangelical ideas, although his background was Roman Catholic. He had a lot of training and informal education through reading. However, his Spanish quality was not great. He did speak a little English but was hardly fluent. He had not traveled, and he did not smoke.

Alexis was a 49-year-old man accused of raping or abusing twenty-three girls at the school where he worked as a janitor. He was quite thin. He had only one visitor: his mother. His quality of speech was good. He did not wear glasses, did not smoke, and had no health problems. He had not traveled. He was good at making things from wood and was very helpful with *patio* cleanup. His general demeanor was nice, considerate, observant, and kind.

These men were the main characters that John knew and met during his first months staying in 118. He got to know them well, perhaps more than he would have liked in some cases, and they became part of his daily experience. Others would enter the scene later, also becoming part of John’s new motley “family” This story revolves around John’s prison life and real experiences, and all these men played an important role in shaping it. John is the “Charlie Brown” in this story, and the others are the real characters around him, much like real life Snoopies, Linuses, Schroeders, etc. But what about John himself?

John Macarewich Cobin (*gringo*) was 57 years old with seven children and two grandsons, a libertarian, accused of two counts of attempted murder, one for firing his gun in public and one for provoking a riot that greatly damaged the town where he lived (Reñaca). He was considered to be an economist in Chile, although his Ph.D. was actually in public policy. In total, he held five earned college degrees, including a master's in economics and another master's and an undergraduate degree in business economics, plus another undergraduate degree in religious studies. John had visited 70 countries, some of them extensively, like the United States, Chile, Italy, and New Zealand. He was a bit chubby, although he had lost a fair amount of weight while in prison. His religion was Baptist, and while his quality of speech was sometimes questionable in Spanish (due to his accent and occasional grammar errors), it was very good in English and poor (but passable) in Italian. He had been a college professor, author of many books and articles, conference speaker, residency and business consultant, Baptist pastor, small construction business owner, and entrepreneur, as well as a pro-life libertarian political activist. He was one of the few inmates who wore glasses, and he had other medical problems such as hypertension, hypothyroidism, insulin resistance, macular degeneration, and diverticulitis. He had undergone eight operations over the last decade for his lower spine, knees, right hand, left kidney, and stomach. He didn't smoke. He was an American by birth but renounced that citizenship at age 52 after obtaining Chilean citizenship. He also acquired Italian citizenship at age 54, after wading through seven years of bureaucratic red tape and waiting for longer than expected, despite the fact that his maternal grandfather and great grandparents were born in southern Italy. He was happier being an Italian (and European Union) citizen than an American.

No one could have ever imagined the tragic events that would befall him and lead to his unjust suffering in the Valparaíso Penitentiary in central Chile. His ordeal likely led many thousands of onlookers to realize they had put far too much confidence in the wayward Chilean state, as evidenced by outrageous hardships John had to endure, wrought by a loud-mouthed, arrogant, insolent, mendacious, and cruel (leftist) prosecutor, along with an arbitrary, a biased judiciary, that could care less about the truth. John thus became a victim not only of assault but also of political posturing and a scapegoat for leftist intolerance. 118, and the judicial process was a nightmare that never ended. All the social theory and public choice economics that John had studied in graduate school were being revealed at the expense of his life, not to mention the hundreds of family members, fellow Christians, and other friends who faithfully supported him through it all.

Chapter III

Time and Chance Happen to Them All

Roberto was an ex-policeman and thief, paroled in May 2020, who was for many years a drug addict both within and without prison. He used a plastic planter made of a water jug to grow his pot plants secretly, hung on the fence up behind 118's male avocado tree. He told John that he had been in various *módulos* and estimated that 60% of inmates were drug addicts. While many drugs enter by means of vaginas and anuses, he said that the majority of the traffic is controlled directly by the *gendarmes*, who enjoy handsome profits. *Reos* or *machucados* (as they are more frequently called) live in such misery in all *módulos* other than 118, and perhaps 107 (maximum security), 101 (woodworkers), and 103 (*hermanos*); they have such a horrible existence that they endeavor to escape it by taking drugs. The prison guards could care less about their lives except that each *machucado* represents a source of revenue. Roberto said that 12,000 pesos (USD15) buy (1) three doses of marijuana joints, the most expensive drug, (2) six doses of cocaine (abundant due to the porous Bolivian border), (3) eight doses of various kinds of pills, or (4) twelve hits of crack. The profit potential is evident with nearly 2,000 *machucados* (often pronounced *machuca'o*) getting high per day.

Consequently, visitation has its pros and cons for *gendarmes* in the business. On the one hand, visitors bring these addicted *reos* money that they can use to buy drugs. On the other hand, they also sneak in an alternative supply of drugs that tend to lower prices and profits. Therefore, nothing is more tightly controlled as visitors enter the prison than illicit drugs, and nothing is encouraged more than keeping money rolling in—even though there is a seldom-enforced 50,000 peso limit per visitor. Cigarettes, which serve as an alternative currency, are also restricted: three packs maximum plus one more (opened) that the visitor supposedly brings for himself to smoke. Hence, visitation serves as a sort of central bank that determines in anarchical form the issue and supply of money in an otherwise closed economy. The limits placed by *gendarme* policy on the amounts of cash or cigarettes that may be brought in (and thus “issued”) is tantamount to a reserve requirement or perhaps a discount rate managed by leaders of a central bank.

Any cheese or dairy product, homemade cake, or any oil, dark-colored soda pop, frozen desserts, or liquids (including detergents) that might conceal or contain drugs are prohibited. Only water and light-colored soft drinks can come in—up to three liters per person. The *gendarmes* provide a list of 60 or 70 items permitted: toilet paper, dish soap, shampoo, hand soap, pizza, store-bought, and packaged baked goods, cooked meats, sandwiches (which may include slices of meat and cheese), salads with certain vegetables (not broccoli or anything that can be fermented), clothes, slippers, towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, disposable razors, chips poured out into clear plastic bags, and detergents—always subject to the *gendarme's* criteria. Clothes with dark coloring: black, green like the *gendarmes* use, or clothes the color of fog, or with a hood are prohibited, lest they be used in an escape attempt.

Apart from having to process and deal with all this information in his second language—Chilean Spanish—John felt like he had been transported to another world. More than a mere information overload, parameters of life and social situation had changed dramatically. Not only did he no longer have his sea view and quiet upper-class neighborhood. He now became intimately acquainted with a couple of dozen people that, in all likelihood, he would have never come in

close social contact within his life. Smoking, drug use, obsession with sex, constant foul language (although most were surprisingly well-mannered around women during visitation), and lack of university education or travel for the great majority, not to mention an incapacity to reason or think well, were common attributes.

For example, Roberto, the 53-year-old habitual alcoholic, called *Viejo Chico* because he looked 75 and weighed the same as a thin short woman, could not read or add numbers together when playing cards. Moreover, many of the men were habitual criminals: Raúl (the younger) and Gianfranco were drug traffickers, Carlos filmed himself engaging in oral sex with his very young daughter, Mauricio and Sergio were convicted of sexually abusing a niece and stepdaughter respectively (both claim they are innocent, and quite possibly are victims of lying enraged women willing to do anything to harm them, especially Mauricio), Alexis, a grade school janitor who sexually abused or touched at least twenty-three children, Miami (Miguel) who was—apparently falsely—convicted of sexually abusing his grandchildren, and a host of prisoners in transit (*en tránsito*) from other jails and charged or convicted of armed robbery, safe-cracking, theft, truck hijacking, murder, and other violent crimes. Some criminals in 118 only did something wrong once: Raúl (the elder, age 70) murdered the mother of his seven-year-old daughter at her school with his pistol. She had been his household maid. Ismael had also shot a woman (his girlfriend) and was thus serving a twenty-year sentence. Alexander was accused of rape. Diego was a young (21) *carabinero* (cop) who got high one night and decided to rob a service station convenience store with some friends. He was sent to home arrest a few months later, in May 2020. Roberto (bald), also an *excarabinero*, stole a motorcycle and was, as noted earlier, for years a drug addict who thus wrecked his marriage. Other men were accused or convicted of various firearms violations or acts of violence, including attempted murder—which would be considered self-defense in places like the United States.

The problem in Chile is screwed up public policy. First, the rights to life, liberty, and property are not equal. Life is a greater right than liberty, which in turn is much greater than property. Therefore, one cannot kill the criminal who is attacking his car (even if one is inside), looting his store, burning down his home, or stealing his wallet. Doing so is murder. The victim thus becomes the victimizer. Second, one's response in self-defense must be proportional. Even if you are in a wheelchair, are an 80-year-old woman, or a portly middle-aged man, if ten thugs in their twenties and thirties assault you with baseball bats, you may not defend yourself with more than a baseball bat. If you pull out your pistol and shoot them all, even though they aggressed you, you will go to jail for ten counts of murder. This outcome will occur even if your gun is properly registered, properly transported, and even if it occurs (possibly) in your own home.

Accordingly, Manuel, an off-duty *gendarme*, was walking with his father when six thugs armed with knives assaulted them. Miguel shot all of them in the side of the lower abdomen or the legs with his legally carried service pistol. He himself was stabbed in the leg. Yet the six scoundrels were set free while Miguel was convicted of two counts of attempted murder and other firearm violations, sentenced to over six years in 118. He is 37, now kicked out of the prison guard service without a pension, and sees his wife, three children, mother, and father during weekly visitation.

Waldo, a younger *carabinero* (32) threatened to kill a 19-year-old man who sexually abused his daughter and two others. That man reported the threat to the police, and when Waldo was intercepted driving on the road, they found a pistol in his car with the serial number filed off. The

district attorney offered him a plea bargain deal where he confessed to a lesser crime but ended up in home arrest for three years and, of course, would lose his job.

John unwittingly drove into a mob of protesters where he lives in Reñaca, an upscale sector of Viña Del Mar. The country had been in chaos for several weeks to that date, November 10, 2019, where communists, hard leftists, and assorted criminals teamed up to destroy over 300 businesses by looting them, burning them to the ground, burning several skyscrapers, hotels, and 118 Metro stations in Santiago, plus many buses. The police were attacked, sometimes with Molotov cocktails, and many were injured. Carjacking was also commonplace. This class of scoundrels announced their intention to loot and destroy Reñaca, and John was one of the 350 “yellow vests” who had come together the previous Thursday to help defend the town. Only fifteen policemen were assigned to face hundreds if not thousands of hooligans. In that context, John arrived and was surrounded by the goons who were blocking the road. It turns out that they only wanted him to get out and dance, but he did not understand the lowlifes or what they were mumbling. Imagine a foreigner who speaks English as a second language driving into Harlem, the Bronx, Watts, South Chicago, or Central Detroit and being accosted by thirty youths who do not speak English well, and you will get the picture. That’s when John showed his gun. At least one video records the thugs shouting, “Son of a bitch; kill him.” Under this threat, and after his pickup truck was pummeled and one scoundrel opened John’s door to pull him out and lynch him, John opened fire dissuasively at the ground, then pursued a staged retreat.

His truck suffered 1.2 million pesos in damage (USD 1,350), which is a lot in Chile and Latin America. They used feet, fists, rocks, bottles, sticks, bats, and who knows what else to strike the pickup truck while John was inside fearing for his life. None of the delinquents were arrested, even although video footage of the event is plentiful. John faced up to 17.5 years in prison for two counts of attempted murder, one count of unjustified discharging of a firearm in public, and one count of provoking the destruction of Reñaca, which occurred later that evening. The criminals were not arrested for looting or burning down businesses in Reñaca either. John was only 2 to 4 meters away from the people and had used guns for years, even carried concealed in the United States legally for over a decade, without even having had to present his pistol. He could have easily hit or killed 4 or 20 of the violent “protesters” if he had so chosen, but he did not. Yet such as Chilean “justice” dominated by the Left.

The ricochet from one of John’s bullets pierced the thigh of one of the criminals who was beating his truck, onehalf supposedly exiting the upper leg just below his buttocks. Two other bullets hit the ground, and one ricochet hit a parked car’s radiator and gearbox, supposedly with two people inside (this claim was made three months after the event). No bullets were found to confirm that John caused the damage or injury. In Chile, that leg wound and damaged radiator yielded two attempted murder charges. It was just downright wrong, thought John (and many others).

He, Manuel, and Waldo were innocent. Bad public policy may have been violated, but in God’s eyes, they did nothing wrong. Self-defense is no sin. Yet Chilean jails hold many innocent victims of injustice and bad public policy. These deprivations amount to human rights abuses that rival those claimed by leftists under Pinochet’s government.

So 118 was a strange environment for John, just as it must have been for Manuel, Waldo, and

perhaps Miami and a couple of others, on account of the kind of people they would become intimately acquainted with.

Nearly all of them were well-mannered, and some were even generous like John was: Raúl (the elder), Luis (a sickly man who did not stay long), Mauricio, Manuel, and Karim. Perhaps the drug traffickers were the least likable, although, among themselves, they were not too bad, along with the most uneducated inmates, like *mozo* Aníbal and the *Viejo Chico*. Karim was a minor elected official (*concejel*) from the Right, charged with undue use of political influence, minor drug charges, money laundering, and participating in the looting by aiding and abetting two criminals he knew to get away. His cell phone was tapped. Aníbal was serving 25 years for his part in a violent robbery of the courthouse and offices, which he undertook as a very young man. He has known nothing but a prison for nearly his entire adult life.

John learned, too, that crime pays for thieves, robbers, safe-crackers, hijackers, and drug traffickers who are smart enough to hide their loot or spread it out among family and people they know. He talked to many of them who were passing through 118 on their way to stand trial in Valparaíso or Viña del Mar, even if they were already in jail in Santiago, Concepción, Rancagua, or elsewhere. Many of them had circuits in Europe and the United States as well as Chile, like Sebastian (Sergio's distant cousin), and thus knew how to play the game and get prison privileges or get free just by knowing how to approach the right guards and offer the right price. Those two were also pretty good chess players, interestingly enough. Only Sebastián and his gang were as highprofile as John, Karim, Alexis, and Raúl (the elder), who got frequent media coverage and were well known throughout the country. John even made it into the night soap opera, *100 días para enamorarse* (one hundred days to fall in love) in Summer 2020 (early March), as the "gringo from Reñaca" (as if someone who defends himself against overwhelming odds with a pistol is nuts). All of them received death threats at some point from other prisoners outside of 118.

People like Ricardo, age 28, serving eight years for killing a friend unintentionally with a knife, who would not leave his home, does not face the adversity that comes from constant biased media coverage. The same is true for Helmut, who committed tax fraud, or the many other men who perpetrated some sex-related crime.

Money and drugs are not the only things that make visitation onerous and complicated. Indeed, those who routinely and regularly endure the visitation process show an extraordinary love, friendship, or commitment to the *reo*. The humiliation of having to strip and squat before a same-sex *gendarme* is bad enough, especially for women (who make up the great majority of visitors). They also have to endure long drives or trips on the public bus, which can be 3½ hours round-trip, depending on where one lives in the Valparaíso coastal region. Prisoners are usually kept close to family and friends, although not always, in order to assure the visitors come and thus bring money for the *machucado* to spend.

Many items are not permitted into the prison without getting written special permission called an *escrito*. The *reo* humbly and gratefully requests that certain items be allowed into the prison, in writing, which is then approved by the *gendarme* in charge of the *módulo* and then sent off to be signed and stamped by the *jefe de internos* (inmates' boss). This document is not easy to get, but once in hand, it must be delivered to one's wife, family member, or friend during the next

visitation. They then have 30 days to purchase the list of items and bring them in. Any items on the list that are not purchased may not be brought later. The *escrito* is for onetime use. Some items that must be entered with an *escrito* include sheets, pillows, quilts, bedspreads, a wristwatch, a plastic thermos, winter jackets, a tablecloth, a plastic table, and up to five plastic chairs. The last two or three items serve to make visitation more pleasant. Chairs are hard to come by, and tables are dirty and often damaged or broken up. Without one's own equipment, one may have to stand during visitation, along with up to five visitors (reduced to two visitors during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic before being suspended altogether on April 10, 2020), but with these items, everyone is assumed at least some minimum comfort in the hall. Moreover, during the rest of the week, the *machucado* is assured of a decent back-supporting chair.

Even 118 has relatively few chairs. If one does not have chairs or a table for visitation, he can often find a *mozo* who will bring them from the gym for 1,000 to 2,000 pesos (a couple of dollars).

Books or magazines in English or another language also require an *escrito* since the *gendarmes* will not be able to read them and determine if they contain an escape plan or other subversive activity. Blankets are usually not allowed in since the state issues fire-retardant ones, even though the *reos* do not like them because they attract tiny biting insects called *chinchas* (bedbugs) that leave nasty scars. They prefer to bring in their own quilts, bedspreads, etc., by whatever means possible.

Some items enter with a special *escrito*, with only one item per document: a non-internet television, a radio, an electric shaver, an electric hair cutter, or trimmer (beards and some mustaches are not allowed in prison). A numbered, itemized receipt with a serial number (or a notarized affidavit to that effect if the product is used) must be attached to the *escrito*, which is not handwritten, but rather goes on a pre-printed form (at least for televisions). Few people bring in radios since they can be purchased in prison for 15,000 pesos or USD18. These electronic items must also be approved and stamped by the *gendarme* technical area.

Getting prescription medicines is even harder. They must go to a *gendarme* in a special office (during shortened business hours Monday-Friday only) and be accompanied by the precise prescription. The hassle is so severe that many *reos* go without their medicines for a year or more. If the *reo* has a lawyer, a court order can be obtained that compels the *gendarmes* to receive them. After receipt, which is only half the battle, each medication is opened and reviewed. If approved, the *reo* will get his medicine a couple of days later. If there is no visitation scheduled during the week, as was the case for 118 during the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, the visitors could not deliver medications on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m., thus obliging them to make a special trip to the jail. Under usual circumstances, when 118 also has a Monday visitation, given that there is no quarantine in effect, the visitors would simply arrive a little bit earlier than 2 p.m. to deliver the medications.

For inmates, visitation days are very important and something they look forward to all week. They get cash, plus get to see friends and loved ones and thus talk about things they have in common—much different than striking up a conversation with other inmates. Visitors have their own set of hassles involved in the process: purchasing or cooking things for the *machucado*, transportation, waiting in line for as much as ninety minutes, going through a degrading and

humiliating search, often while naked—all of this happening only *after* they have done one-time registration to be a visitor.

The *reos*, too, have a process they complete. They put on their best clothes, collect their laundry, empty food containers, legal and personal items to be delivered to visitors and others, gather plastic chairs and tables, tablecloths, toilet paper, and hand soap. After lining up with all his stuff and counting off as in a military lineup, they march off, hauling their stuff and head to the visitation hall, which for 118 is one room 15 meters × 10 meters, and a few smaller rooms or areas, where all *reos* meet with their visitors. The *gendarmes* have a room next door and watch *vía* cameras. Every *reo* informally reserves and uses the same space every week, and, unlike the United States, hugging, kissing, and hand-holding *are* allowed. It is about as noisy as a semiclosed street café in Europe. The *reo* sets up his table, chairs and makes it all look pretty. Many buy cookies or snacks to share with their visitors and bring electric tea kettles. If they have children visit, they bring candy and toys, too. They then wait by the door and run across the yard to meet their visitor and help them with their bags when they get past the final checkpoint (wherein their ultraviolet wrist stamps are scanned).

After the visitation, the women leave first. Male visitors have to wait for the *reos* to line up, count off, and march back to the *módulo* before leaving themselves in order to prevent prisoners from posing as visitors and escaping. Thus, while women may leave visitation early, men have to wait until the very end.

For conjugal visits, which occur on a set day each month (e.g., the first Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m.), the 10 to 15 women assigned that day arrive together and must be on time (e.g., 9:30 a.m.). If they are even two minutes late, they may not come in. They may not bring goods or food with them like in normal visitation. After arriving at the special *módulo* 106, they are sent to their permanently assigned room numbers where their husband or boyfriend is waiting for them. He must arrive even earlier, showing his registration or pass to the *módulo* guard in order to let him go, then check the room for damage (otherwise he will be held responsible), make up the twin bed, put the toiletries in the bathroom—along with any cleaning supplies, set up the beverage and snacks, and put on music, etc. The visit lasts three hours, and a hot shower is supposedly available—the only one the *machucado* will get all month. Later, all have to be tidied up, packed up, carried away, and stored. Conjugal visit sheets and supplies, along with a storage bag, are all requested by special *escrito*.

John was impressed by all the complexity involved with each kind of visit, not to mention the hassles and process. Due to bad information and other issues with his wife being initially ashamed, he did not schedule a conjugal visit for nearly five months. Doing so was easier for him since he was legally married and was still only accused rather than convicted. Inmates who are already convicted have to show good conduct in cleaning up the *módulo* or some other lowpaid (57,000 pesos per month) or unpaid service, and those who are not married have to prove the woman who will go to the conjugal visit has visited him during normal visitation six or more consecutive times. All John had to do was fill out a form with the social assistant, and his wife then had to be interviewed, and the official marriage certificate turned in. Karim, who arrived a few weeks after John, completed the process as well, along with his steady girlfriend, and was scheduled for the same day and time as John. It is a great joy for men in 118 to get a conjugal visit scheduled and, although details are never disclosed, it is one of the few things that

bring a heartfelt smile to the faces of those who participate.

The seventeen to eighteen hours shut in the prison cell each day (*encerrado*) made John anxious at first, but after a few weeks, he learned to turn his mind toward productive routines and self-imposed duties that allowed him to largely forget where he was. For several weeks he was alone in his cell with no television and no books to read other than a pocket New Testament in Spanish—which he read completely. Mauricio lent him a radio so he could listen to the news of the latest looting and destruction being perpetrated in Chile in late 2019 by leftist radicals and criminals. He did not miss the television; he had not had one in his home for over thirty-five years either.

Since he was a Baptist, and his faith in Jesus Christ defined who he was, he sang one or several hymns each day (a practice which continued throughout his 12 months of incarceration awaiting trial and afterward), prayed, and read his Bible. A week later, the prison psychologist lent him *Schindler's List*, in English, which he read forthwith. John had a plate, sheets, and pillow lent from Aníbal, a backpack lent by Mauricio, pajamas, and two dress shirts given by Luis, and some toiletries and tableware given to him by Raúl (the elder). He thought they were all quite generous and, in reality, there is a certain solidarity among *reos*, who will help each other—newcomers in particular (note: many things were still lacking; the shower was still cold, and there was no way to cook food). Over the next few months, his wife and friends bought him all these things or gave him cash so he could get them for himself and return all that he borrowed or buy it from the lenders (e.g., the backpack, which is not permitted to bring in during visitation).

When Sergio moved into John's cell after a few weeks, things changed. He taught John how to heat water in a bucket with a *colita* (the extracted heating element of an electric tea kettle). Buckets were easier to get than mirrors or toilet seats but still were not exactly readily available. Yet, this heating innovation allowed “showers” to be taken in the stall by scooping out water with a cup or plastic jar and pouring it over one's head and body, scooping or shampooing up, then rinsing with the same cup or the bucket itself. He brought a *micrón*, too, a primitive heating element used to cook food or heat “shower” water. It consisted of a makeshift plug attached to a thin coiled wire, resting in a chiseled-out groove in a brick that was housed in scrap pine nailed together. A cross-patched wire was bent over the top to make a grill of sorts. The heat was generated by pure resistance: positive and negative energy meet in the coil, turning the dangerous but extremely useful artifact's coiled heating element red-hot. High-amperage items like the *colita*, the *micrón*, the electric kettle (*hervidor*), and the electric oven (like Mauricio had) put a strain on the electrical system and could trip the circuit breaker. Indeed, if *machucados* from more than one cell per floor used such a device at the same time, the breaker would be tripped, and tempers flared. Losing power was bad because everyone was locked inside, and no one could flip the breaker—thus calling for the aforementioned steel rod act.

Before Sergio's arrival, John had been puzzled by his fellow *reos* yelling through the six-inch-square door portal, something he could hardly understand—usually from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and again from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. They were, in fact, saying “*ocupado arriba*,” “*ocupado abajo*” “*libre arriba*,” and “*libre abajo*,” i.e., in-use up high, in-use below, free to use up high, and free to use down below. Sergio explained that they were informing others on the floor (six cells in the case of 118) that a high-amp artifact plugged into the circuit was being used so that no one else would do so at the same time, and if they were already using it would let everyone know immediately. The upper circuit in each cell powered a light in the ceiling. The *reos* run wires from that spot to

put a bulb over the sink and a couple of outlets, plus replace the original bulb with a long luminescent tube system. The lower circuit was originally for one outlet, which is extended to become two or three. The whole system is rather ugly but still functional, and after painting all the walls, it looks a little better.

In 118, makeshift shelves can be bolted to the walls and above the shower stall with power tools lent to *reos* for the day. The wood came from crating material and disassembled cheap furniture, which is filed and sanded down. Some of the shelves, planters, or furniture are made with secret compartments that serve to hide valuables and cell phones or chargers. Sergio put up curtains to close off the toilet and give some “privacy” (as much as could be afforded in a 2-meter × 3-meter cell) and cover the windows to prevent guards from peering in. Plus, a grinder was also used to adjust the height of the beds and cut metal tubing used for shelving. Some *reos* offered to help for a few bucks. If the work was extensive, the cost could rise to as much as 80,000 pesos (100 USD).

For 10,000 pesos (USD12), a fellow *reo* will make a portable light socket (bulb costs 3,000 to 5,000 pesos more) with switch and outlet. Along with an extension cord (5,000 pesos), this apparatus allows a *machucado* to illuminate his own bunk independent of what others in the cell do. John did not get this artifact of his own until he was sent to live with Mauricio a few months later.

Each cellmate’s television was hung with wires at the foot of his bunk so that he could watch what he wanted with earphones. Mauricio put his on a shelf, however, and regularly lent it to the *gendarme* in charge that day to watch during the otherwise boring day—gaining favor with them. The trouble is that with others coming into his cell every day, the risk of loss of other items increased. *Reos* regularly steal from each other, especially cell phones, money, electric stoves, and radios. Money should, therefore, never be left in the cell, but carried on one’s person always. Smaller electrical items must be hidden in socks and shoes and stored out of sight. The *gendarmes* are not the only threat; one must also beware of other *machucados*.

The sink is tiny (16 inches by 8 inches) and located directly over the toilet in 118, making it impossible not to get the toilet wet when washing dishes or brushing one’s teeth. The toilet rim must be constantly cleaned before sitting on it. Some cells have a modified toilet where a sewage pipe (that usually leaks) is extended from the wall to allow the insertion of a normal toilet that a liftable seat can be placed on (for 8,000 to 10,000 pesos). This system is easier on the back since the toilet is normally located directly under the sink and the drain pipe and sink hit one’s back unless he chisels his body into an angled position just right. At least there are working toilets in 118. As noted earlier, they are disabled in most other *módulos*, and the remodeled *módulos*, like 107, now have Turkish-style toilets with just a hole in the floor to squat over. There are no faucets in the cells. Instead, a timed button (or a stick in its absence) is pressed that releases the water, although *reos* learn how to use sticks to force the button to stay on.

Mirrors and a bathroom shelf can be had for a price but are not installed in every cell. Shower curtains and privacy curtains enclosing each bunk are more common, the rods usually being placed by pressure between concrete walls or strung on wire or string fixed between bedposts. Mauricio also installed a rod above the shower to serve to hold hangers and thus convert the shower stall into a hanging-clothes closet during the day. Manuel had an even more sophisticated

system, which John later adopted for himself.

“Seasoned, convicted *reos* get to choose their own cellmates,” explained Sergio, “and there is seniority in each cell with the inmate with the longest time in prison dictating the rules of each cell.” If such *reos* do not like their cellmate, they can ask the *suboficial mayor* (Sr. González) in charge of their *módulo* to move them out, and this request is usually granted (especially when accompanied by a small payment). In general, a *reo* has little control over where he sleeps, bathes, and dresses. One day, for instance, the *suboficial mayor* (as head *gendarme*) simply told John to gather his belongings and move in with Mauricio. This change was sort of an upgrade, since Mauricio did not smoke in the cell as Sergio did, nor frequently pass smelly gas, and John’s two-month-long persistent cough quickly subsided. Note: Sergio had stomach cancer and thus a prosthesis that provoked lots of gas and stomach problems, especially when the *gendarmes* deprived him of his medication. John did suffer from having to be in the bottom bunk, which was hard for someone 6’3” and 275 pounds to get into. Plus, Mauricio had far more rules and petty complaints than Sergio, who had enough as it was. Cell phone service was also quite worse, although Mauricio had several more ingenious hiding places than Sergio did. Indeed, the *gendarmes* found and confiscated their shared phone once (which Sergio technically owned), costing a bundle. Sergio was not as brilliant as he led one to believe. Of course, seasoned players like Miami had cell phones for sale or rent, complete with planters or other hiding places or *caletas* produced by Roberto (bald). Prices ranged from 40,000 to 150,000 pesos (USD50 to USD190). Chips and SIM cards enter through the cunning methods of visitors and were thus not included in the price paid.

Visitors were not alone in this artifice. Mauricio told John, “You have to lie to survive; save your Christian principles for when you are free.” Otherwise, you will pay a heavier price in prison for having a cell phone, shaver, thumb drive, hard drive, Kindle, smart TV, or other prohibited item. They might even use it as an excuse to boot a man out of 118 into the general population. So the *reos* practice stories and rehearse lines about what to say if caught. John mused that doing so merely exemplified the horrible existence that he and others were subjected to. “Why?” he thought, “do the *gendarmes* care so much about electronics and communication equipment?” People just want to stay in touch with friends and loved ones or work on their cases. Yet, apparently, some *reos* use such devices to defraud people outside or facilitate prison breaks. If they were honest, they might also add that disallowing them creates a more profitable business opportunity for the *gendarmes*. In theory, government prohibitions, restrictions, and regulations in one area of activity produce windfalls in those related areas and activities not so beleaguered. Chilean prisons provide a good example of how the theory works out in practice.

Chapter IV

What is Crooked Cannot Be Made Straight

The truth of the matter is that the *gendarmes* (also called *pacos*) often make prisoners' lives miserable by confiscating cell phones, obligating them to do slave labor by hauling trash, cleaning cells, and exterior areas, serving them food, lending them their televisions, feeding them, etc.

Some things in prison were vital to one's mental health. It did not take long for John to realize just how important communicating with friends and family outside was. For a long time, he had no access to making calls himself, but he solaced himself with the fact that he had seventeen unique visitors, most of whom visited multiple times. Those times were his only contact with his world, viz. the Christians, Libertarians, and others that he knew and enjoyed conversing with.

His new family of criminals simply was not the same, even though he grew fond of some of these "friends" of a sort: Rubén and Ismael for chess-playing, Manuel and Waldo (and likely Miami) for being innocent victims of bad public policy like himself, Alexander and Ismael for their incipient evangelical faith that they practiced with him on Sundays. Many others asked John questions about the faith but were not practicing Christians: Waldo, *Che* (the Argentine), Roberto (bald), Manuel, Miami (Miguel), Raúl (younger), and some others *en tránsito*. In some sense, John, who was a Baptist pastor for three years, was on a mission field, and he also wrote (by hand) a book based on 1 Peter 2:19-20 called *Suffering Unjustly: Imprisonment, Wrecked Families, and Property or Wealth Destruction Affecting Christians in Modern Democratic Societies*, destined for the Evangelical market. But none of that activity could replace the profound loneliness and discomfort that frequently plagued him. Hence, cell phone instant messaging and occasional conversations went a long way towards alleviating these maladies.

Yet his emotional uneasiness was still manifest by his frequent tears during visitation every time his wife would show up for only the last twenty or forty minutes of two or three hours scheduled visit. It hurt him so deeply that the woman he loved would not come on time, nor did it matter to her that she only saw her husband an hour or less a week. She was late for everything in life. He knew that was so and, therefore, understood that her tardiness was not only directed at him. But it still hurt. He was just glad that she regularly bought him money, clean laundry, and food so he could survive. He was grateful since so many *reos* had no visitors at all.

John's wife (Pamela Sepulveda Mendoza) never apologized. Instead, she always justified herself, but at least she almost always came. She refused to learn to drive and thus took the bus (one hour forty minutes each way), which was a total hassle that she endured. All that effort just to see her husband for at most an hour a week. Other inmates began to notice his wife, supposedly a practicing Christian, with such a bad track record. If others coming to visit gave her a ride, they would also arrive late, usually on account of her. Other *reos* felt sorry for John, watching him sit alone for most of the visit while everyone else was in their designated spot in the room.

Actually, they were self-designated spots, and once fixed, they were set that way forever. Visitors always knew exactly where to go and when they arrived. The only significant variations

were imposed externally, like the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020. The *pacos* limited visitation to one day a week but extended it from two to three hours, also prohibiting the entrance of visitors over the age of sixty-five or under the age of two, along with those who were pregnant. Such temporary rules left some *reos* without any visitors at all, and John realized that the plight of the poor *machucado*-without-visitors was severe. The pain would set in after only a few weeks of confinement.

John realized early on that prison food produced diarrhea. Maybe it was the excess lard thrown into the food barrels that one could see coating plates and bowls once the cold wash water hit them. John suspected chemicals, germs from unwashed *reos*' hands that prepared it, or maybe even inputs of spit or urine might be responsible. One thing was quite clear that those *machucados* who could avoid or skip *rancho*, the stovetop barrels of hot food that usually arrived in 118 at 11 a.m. and again at 2 p.m., would do so. This grub made up the food supply for both the day and the evening, after their modest (skimpy) breakfast.

There was also a food service called *dieta*, without salt but slightly better quality food, exclusively for people with chronic diseases, brought by a server once a day around 1 p.m. It was designed for *reo*'s with hypertension, diabetes, etc. The only practical way to avoid prison food was to have a wife or mother bring in food *de la calle* (from the street). Sometimes a friend might also bring a pizza or *empanadas*. John noticed that when he only ate food *de la calle* he had no diarrhea. The main problem was keeping brought-in food refrigerated in one's cell. There was an old box freezer in the four-table dining hall that worked adequately, but it was stuffed full after the visitation, and poorer *reos* sometimes stole from it. When John moved in with Mauricio things changed since he was allowed to use the refrigerator in the prison's paramedic section (infirmary).

After four months of confinement, John usually ignored the call to get *rancho*, although he would get some of it if there were washable chunks of meat or whole potatoes floating in the mix. He qualified for *dieta*, too, having had hypertension for nearly a decade, along with insulin resistance. The *dieta* server, a *reo* with mask and clear plastic gloves, would hand-plop the veggies, starch, and some meat or salmon into the other *reo*'s bin, plastic box, or tray. Often, the meal was just veggies, and some verdant slop, maybe with some exploded meat remains (*dinamitada*) mixed in and impossible to wash. John, like many others, just took a pass, preferring to go hungry for the day. The trash cans filled up with such slop. It was such a waste.

The *suboficial mayor* (equivalent to the rank of chief petty officer) named González, who headed 118, pointed out to John that it was only due to his graciousness that 118's *reos* were allowed to take both *rancho* and *dieta*. All other *módulos*' *reos* had to choose one or the other, and whatever they took had to suffice from noontime till bedtime. The *suboficial mayor*'s disposition depended in part on the money. Sergio pointed out, "Look, John, did you see that *reo* put 1,000 pesos in the server's pocket? The *mozo* then collected the tips, which were not given for doing a good job but rather to encourage him to bring meat. Later on, the *mozo* would square up with the *suboficial mayor* by quietly passing him his percentage." Once again, John thought, "money answers everything" (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

Prisoners needed money, too. The "smart," wealthy criminals, for whom it may be said, "crime pays," were the thieves and drug traffickers that always set aside part of their profits. Their

dough was often hidden under someone else's name (the same person who usually paid his bills outside and brought him money during visitation). John once asked Hans, a *reo en tránsito*, what his profession was. He said he specialized in cold-steel-torch cutting, that is, safes, and big rigs, that is, hijacking trucks hauling retail goods. All thieves considered what they did to be *work*, and Sebastian provided great detail of his clan's hits on jewelry stores in the U.S.A., where he spent five years in a Los Angeles prison, Western Europe (mainly Sweden, Italy, Germany), and Chile, along with ATMs in Chile. For thieves and traffickers, jail time was just par for the course in their chosen careers.

Other *machucados* did not have money unless they were retired like Raúl (the elder) who sold out his pizza businesses in Miami and New York, investing the proceeds in Chilean real estate or Rubén who had already a monthly pension of one and a half million pesos (or 2,000 U.S. dollars) after putting in 30 years of public service. They both paid the *mozo* (indirectly the *suboficial mayor*), so they could have private cells in 118.

Generally, non-rich women-murderers and rapists, especially child rapists, did not do so well. They had to stay in 118 or 107 to avoid being killed by other *machucados*. Yet some of them with working wives or middle-class families got 15,000 to 25,000 pesos weekly to spend. Other *machucados* had to wash clothes, clean cells, or work with wood, making ships, birds, dolphins, coffee tables, and other objects to sell. *Che* (the Argentine), Aníbal, Franco, Waldo, Carlos, Alex, and a couple of others were regulars in the trade. Roberto (bald) repaired things, built and installed shelves, modified bunk beds, did electrical work, and cut hair to make money. He also accepted cigarettes as payment. People suspected he was still using drugs, probably the only *reo* in 118 to do so. He was known to climb secretly up the male avocado tree in order to meet with another *reo* in adjacent *módulo* 114 or to water his hidden pot plants.

John, Alex, Karim, Manuel, Ismael, Mujica, Marcelo, Mauricio, and a few others were among the lucky ones who had some regular income from visitors. For the rest, earning a few cigarettes or a couple of thousand pesos (3 USD) a day was a good living by 118 standards. Roberto (bald) ripped John off when he first arrived, who had needed to remove the bars on his bunk bed that confined his head and feet, charging him 5,000 pesos (instead of 2,000 pesos), thus making Manuel, who was helping John get settled, angry. Later on, when John moved in with Mauricio, the same Roberto (bald) fixed the bed with the same problem, built and installed two shelves, and put up a small shower rack for 10,000 pesos (going market price). Aníbal would, however, charge 15,000 pesos for the service since he had to pay to rent the larger power tools he used. Roberto just used a hammer and perhaps a drill.

One might not think that half a foot would make much difference, but as John was lying in bed in Mauricio's room, the two feet between him and the rack above his head and face seemed claustrophobic compared to the 2½ feet he enjoyed in the middle bunk when he was with Sergio. Since a *reo* spends at least fifteen hours a day on his back (sometimes as much as eighteen hours a day) on his back, this space is important. Reading, writing, watching television, listening to the radio, and thinking are all done in this lethargic, uncomfortable position. There is no room in such small cells to have more than one man up at a time unless they happen to be sitting at the mini table eating together. Each man takes his daily 30-minute turn getting ready, while the other (or others) wait their turn. The only other times a *reo* gets out of bed, besides going out to the yard, are when he needs to use the toilet or when a *paco* calls him from the little metal portal in

the door.

Even though he had not yet been convicted, John hated living in prison—even though 118 was much better than other *módulos*. There was always some hassle, something uncomfortable, something cold, something dangerous, or something leading to loneliness, depression, or discomfort. When offered the flu vaccine on March 24th, 2020, perhaps allotting some marginally better resistance to the Coronavirus pandemic, he refused it. Miami, Raúl (the elder), Rubén, and Roberto (*Viejo Chico*) had diabetes and were obligated to be vaccinated.

John told them that in all honesty, he would prefer to die rather than live confined in a Chilean prison with his wife living off the love of charity of friends and his son David. If he were dead, his wife would still have their luxury sea view apartment (free and clear) plus the payout from a modest life insurance policy to live on, not to mention the money accumulated in his private pension account. While she would no longer have her husband, and others would no longer have a father or grandfather, no one would be burdened financially. John was a devout Baptist, and he was prepared to meet his Maker. Probably no one he knew, including those in 118, doubted that fact.

Some others in 118 were religious, too, at least nominally. Miami, Raúl (the younger), and Rubén professed some Roman Catholic or self-built eclectic faith, as did a few others. Waldo was raised Pentecostal and respected the faith but no longer practiced it. The same was true of Sergio, who had at first sang English-language hymns daily with John in their cell but later became bitter towards God and rejected the faith altogether (at least until later in 2020).

Alexander had a burgeoning, renewed faith that he had not practiced well prior to being accused of rape and being imprisoned. Now he was keenly interested and regularly attended the Sunday services that John led, along with Ismael and Pedro (Lorenzo), plus any Evangelicals *en transito*. Alexander and Pedro still had to use the table of contents to find the books of the Bible, but they were quite interested and listened intently to the message. John lent him the hymnal he got during a visitation from Valentín Navarrete Urbina, his dear friend and co-leader of the historic Baptist online Zoom group. Alexander copied (and learned) many hymns in his notebook while his cellmates Alex and Waldo made lewd remarks and watched sexually-explicit material (not quite pornography) in their cell. Pedro asked lots of basic questions and listened intently to the answers. He did not have his glasses with him in jail, making it hard to read. Ismael was the more advanced believer, although he had backslid considerably (and would later in 2020, do so again), and he always closed the *culto* (service) in prayer. John mostly brought the word from the tiny Gideon's New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs that Sergio had lent him. Together they sang Psalm 100, Matthew 6:33, John 16:33, and hymns like Holy, Holy, Holy, and How Great Thou Art (from their sole Spanish hymnal). These religious services occurred on the *patio*. No one else seemed to mind them singing, praying, or reading and talking about the Bible. But none of them joined them either.

Life in the yard was tolerable but hardly pleasant. John noticed the flies on everything, even food eaten on the *patio* or the dining room, but after a month, he got used to this disgusting reality and just ignored them. He noticed much more, the occasional big rat (*rata*) or mouse (*laucha*), which (he was told) ran far more rampant in other *módulos*. All but long-gray-haired, animal-loving Raúl (the elder) hated the vermin and hunted them down with considerable success, especially Roberto (*Viejo Chico*). The other *reos* also complained to the *pacos* about Raúl (the elder) feeding the pigeons, and he stopped doing so. Chileans, by and large, seem to consider pigeons

to be flying rats and equally prone to spreading diseases in a generally unsanitary environment.

The two open shower stalls and toilets on the *patio*, used primarily by *reos en tránsito* and those in 118 or 118A without a working shower, were also of questionable sanitary conditions. But John was always reminded how similar facilities and other *módulos* were far worse. At least the raw sewage was cleaned out of those in 118 daily. Elsewhere it ran down the halls. Sometimes *cloro* (chloride solution) was used to clean. The private toilet with seat, located in the back of a haircut room, was kept cleaner but was well used and often sullied since it was the only sit-down toilet available to the men during the day unless special permission was granted to them to return to their cells (such authorization was infrequent). There was also only one running water source with two faucets over a large trough used to wash hands, plates, utensils, clothing, shoes, and whatever else. It was basically busy most of the day.

The trough's drain had no screen, and John inadvertently lost a plastic chess castle down the drain. He had been washing the pieces after playing chess with a *reo* infected with the mumps. By the time he and Alex opened the clean-out screen on the other side of the *patio*, the piece was already gone. However, Carlos fashioned and painted a replacement castle the next day, carving a chunk from a wooden handle. In prison, *reos* learn to fix, patch, sew, or replace everything.

Every afternoon, movable items are put away. The next day, clothes racks are once again pulled out, and the clotheslines pulled between the buildings and the fences are filled with recently washed clothes in order to ensure everything dries before the men are required to return to their cells. This routine occurred during the summer, late spring, and early fall. At other times of the year, drying could take two or three days. The haircut room was well used and cleaned daily. Haircuts cost 1,000 pesos, and the results were fine, so long as one wanted his hair cut very short, which most men normally did. After Roberto (bald) and Diego left, Ismael took over the barbering job and would cut John's hair for free.

Everyone tried to get along. After a while, everyone knew everyone else almost as well as their ring of friends and acquaintances outside. Just as if they were months at sea on a small Navy ship, courtesy, respect, and tolerance had to be practiced. *Módulo* 118 is a small four-story building with a small concrete yard. The first floor contains the space for the *paco* in charge, an office with a small bathroom, plus a longer, narrow lunchroom where *reos* often meet with their lawyers, psychologists, and social assistants. The staircase is in between. One door leads to the *patio* and the other to the larger open area with access to the trash processing station, visitation hall, offices of the *gendarmes*, psychologists, and social workers, the paramedic and nurses station (the infirmary, where a doctor shows up from time to time), and the other *módulos*. On the other side, once on the *patio*, the first floor has access to the dining room, where people also talk, play cards or gamble, and play chess. Some worked on their wood projects, too. At the other end of the nineteen-step-wide *patio* are the aforementioned bathrooms, shower, and haircut room. Across the *patio*, eleven steps in total, there are two sheds (*bodegas*), one of which stores supplies and very few tools. Next to it is a staircase that leads to the four- or six-bed cells for *reos en tránsito* or who were arrested at night and had yet to be assigned a *módulo*.

Those are the cells that Miami, Alex, Raúl (the elder), John, Carlos, Diego, Alexander, Ismael, and Pedro cleaned nearly every day prior to quarantine, stopping the flow of incoming detainees. They performed this *aseo* in 15 minutes (it is always a filthy mess, and the *reos* often destroy the

foam mattresses and strew garbage and food all over the floor). Those cells are bleak, cold, and have no shower or electrical outlets. Below them on the ground floor are other cells, equally unattractive and replete with biting insects like *chinchas* (bedbugs), one cell with six beds, and the others with four. They house the handicapped or very sick *machucados*. Most have electricity. Usually, there are five to eight men there. The *reos* in this building share the *patio* with the *reos* of 118, except that those *en transito* usually return to their cells an hour earlier and do not get to go out to the *patio* at all on Sundays. If there are a lot of new arrivals at night to be assigned to a *módulo* (*estar clasificado*), they leave first thing in the morning. The infirmed share the dining area with the *reos* of 118, but those *en tránsito* do not; they also use the little oven (until it broke down) and the freezer in the dining area if they choose.

The upper three floors of 118's building have five cells per floor, 2-meters by 3-meters in size, with a triple bunk bed and toilet with sink (usually directly above it) and a shower stall. The fourth (top) floor was nicest and reserved for *reos* who secretly paid for the space like Rubén, or highly prized *mozos* who were unpaid workers and were distributed across the prison during the day in order to perform their functions. The third floor housed Sergio, Ricardo, Aníbal, Franco, Raúl (the younger), Miami, Patricio, John, Mauricio, and Raúl (the elder). These room assignments would change several times throughout the year. The second floor had Roberto (bald), *Che* (Argentine), Carlos, Waldo, Alexis, Alexander, Ismael, an unknown *mozo*, José, and Francisco, Manuel, Karim, another two *mozos*, Diego, and Marcelo (the *mozo* who worked with food and spoke decent English, having lived in Australia several years).

John gave Marcelo, at his request, a couple of books he had written: *Bible and Government* and *Christian Theology of Public Policy*. The *reos* of 118 were of various ages, although most were between 20 and 35. A few were in their forties, a few more in their 50s, and still a few others over age 60. Besides Marcelo, Pedro spoke a little English. He stayed in an unlit *en transito* cell while he awaited a spot in the psychiatric ward cell next door in *módulo* 117, even though he seemed mostly normal (the *pacos* found something in his medical history that led them to put him on the waiting list to go to that *módulo*).

Manuel and Sergio wanted to learn English from John but gave up rather quickly. Ismael had been more enthusiastic, but his progress had been slow and eventually ceased altogether. There are two factions in 118—usually drawn along economic-capacity lines but also according to relative intelligence. Some backbiting and gossip were generated by this factionalism, but not much. It was mostly seen when there were special events that entailed bringing in meat for barbecues (*asados*) on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and Independence Day (September 18th). The group of the "haves," who tend to be slightly more sophisticated intellectually, planned for themselves and used one grill while the others gathered around the other. The only thing of which there may be said to be plenty of is white bread (*huallulla*), four pieces of which are given to each *reo* at breakfast (and usually bagged). Chairs and tables are limited. The better-off *reos* and in some cases, like Raúl (the elder), John, and Mauricio, have their own chairs to use when they are on the *patio* or dining hall, which they also utilize during visitation. In 118's *patio*, unlike other *módulos*, there are some steel benches. But many men prefer to stand instead of using them, which beats lying in bed for so many hours of confinement.

Chapter V

He Who Increases Knowledge Increases Sorrow

John found that sitting around likewise produced its own problems. Convicted criminals have less to worry about in the sense that they know the score. They know how many years of confinement remain and how long until they can be paroled for good conduct. They thus have superior mental health. The elderly might be the only exception.

For instance, Raúl (the elder) was 70 years old when he murdered the mother of his daughter. Hence, he was facing up to 40 years in jail. He told John on several occasions that he had traveled and lived his life and that if he were finally convicted and sentenced to more than ten years, suicide would be his logical option. He added, “They will move me out of 118 into the general population, but who wants to live the rest of his life like that and die of old age in prison?” His main focus was on paying a lawyer to get custody of his seven-year-old daughter changed to his sister instead of the Jehovah’s Witnesses that the court assigned to foster her. The second choice would be for her to go with one of his adult children who lived in the United States. Either way, he was prepared to spend a lot of his wealth to accomplish that goal. Then, even as an atheist, he could comfortably take an overdose of diabetes medicine and painlessly die in his sleep (he had a good store of that medication that would do the job). John tried to talk to Raúl about his need for the Savior, asking what he had to lose by trusting in Christ— noting the famous wager of Pascal: “If I am wrong I will never know it and neither will anyone else, but if I am right then I have eternal life all the gainsayers and atheists will face eternity in hell.” Upon hearing it, Raúl scorned and rebuffed John. John understood Raúl’s logic for wanting to die but not why he was willing to throw away eternity so callously. Both men still faced considerable uncertainty, but John at least had his faith and believed that God would reward him for his unjust suffering, condemning, even more, his persecutors (unless they would repent).

Even those *reos* who did not face uncertainty still lived in fear—especially outside of 118. They feared other *machucados* who might injure or kill them, steal their money, drugs, or food. They also feared that the *pacos* would not give them the required medications or, indeed, needed medical care. Sergio went for fourteen months without his postcancer surgery medicine, and endoscopy and other exams required every six months. The *gendarmes* could care less about oncology patients. For John, getting his medicine into prison for hypertension, insulin resistance, hypothyroidism, diverticulitis, and hormone difficulties was a struggle only won by his lawyer’s intervention. But Sergio could not afford a lawyer. He simply had to suffer like all other poor *machucados*. Another fear that many already faced was that of not having visitors or even being forgotten. Many girlfriends and even wives abandoned their men after a while. Without visitors, a *reo* almost completely loses his previous identity and world, not to mention money, food, and goods to help him get through his wretched life.

Other sadness or worries affected *reos* in varying degrees, which John realized after weeks of casual conversation. For instance, Alexander’s mother died while he was in 118. He requested special permission to attend her funeral or gathering afterward, but the *gendarmes* denied the request—even though under such circumstances, it is possible to grant it. Not surprisingly, he was sad. Some men have more trouble than others being confined to such small spaces. But others, like Miami, who was a naval aviator for many years, were used to being confined on a

ship for up to three months. Hence, 118 had many ex-military who were accustomed to the rigors of confinement, but not all.

Furthermore, the grief of knowing that one will be condemned by an unjust system produced anxieties. John's first night in 118 was spent in the bunk below muscular Helmut, who told him frankly that even if innocent, he was still going to be convicted of something. That is simply how the unjust Chilean system works. John refused to believe it then, but after four months of experience and hearing about others' experiences, he was sure it was true. By then, he had had a taste of hearings and false accusations of district attorney Paola Rojas and other lawyers in the prosecution's cohort like Andrés Lagos, Rita Díaz, and Carlos Oliva. Although not in John's case, he saw such unscrupulous and even evil people seeking long prison terms for crimes the accused had not committed in the hope of settling with the accused in exchange for a confession to some lesser crime, in the absence of a conviction, for the fiction presented in court.

In John's case, the prosecutors were so debased and degenerate that they actually took pleasure in seeing the fiction become a reality, the victim turned into the perpetrator, and the accused punished for something he did not do. John thought, "There is a special place in hell reserved for people like that." As the Apostle Paul said, "it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you" (2 Thessalonians 1:6).

Convicted *reos* (*condenados*) focused on obtaining benefits (*beneficios*)—either by paying off certain *pacos* (as Hans was an expert in doing) or by completing $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{2}{3}$ of their sentences. The first step was to get to a halfway house of sorts, called a CET (*Centro de Estudio y Trabajo* or study and work center), where *machucados* are paid little but learn to be bakers, welders, plumbers, or other tradesmen, and thus are able to be reinserted into society. They also get to run errands into town, and on the weekends, even go to their homes after completing some designated trial period. Thus, the remainder of their sentence is completed with more liberty. However, to obtain such a benefit, one must receive the approbation of the *gendarme* in charge of the *módulo*, who affirms that the *reo's* conduct—usually cleaning (*aseo*) done—has been very good or excellent. Then, he must please the psychologist by acting humble and penitent, even for a crime he did not commit. Next, he has to get past the social assistant assigned to the *módulo* (Silvana in the case of 118 at that time). Still, there is no guarantee that one will get to a CET. Manuel's application, for instance, ended with his high hopes dashed in December 2019 when the social assistant did not approve him.

Another benefit available after years of imprisonment is Sunday leave (*dominical*), where the *reo* is allowed to go home on Sundays at 7:30 a.m. and return in the evening. A few months after that, he can qualify for weekends at home and finally only spend nights in prison before being set at full liberty.

Accused *reos* awaiting trial (*imputados*) do not qualify for benefits and technically do not have to do *aseo* (as slaves in effect) since they do not have a conduct score. Yet, if they want to stay in 118, they must show commitment and good behavior in order to please the *paco* in charge. But in the meantime, they seek a judge's order to be sent to home arrest to await trial (*cambio de medio cautelar*) rather than wait in 118. John was imprisoned because the district attorney convinced the judge that he was a danger to society and a flight risk. Later, the judge that initially sent him to 118 (Roberto Pinto) told him (while visiting the accused in jail) that John

was mainly there for his own protection, given that so many had threatened to kill him. John noted that other judges did not seem to agree. Later, Judge Aida Torres told him that the reason he was not in home arrest is that he had had private attorneys. If he would simply change to the public defenders, they would get him out of 118 and into home arrest. He did so, and in the hearing Guillermo Améstica, the public defender assigned to John did not show up. Instead, a colleague came who knew nothing about John's case and even misstated his age (56 instead of 57). The district attorney restated the facts as she saw them, noted the several prior failures to change *medio cautelar*, and Carlos Oliva, another self-professed communist attorney assailing John, stated that as a Libertarian, John was against the state and that fact made him a danger to society. The judge had rejected the public defender's request to change John to house arrest out of concern for his age and risky health problems, and light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Guillermo appealed a few days later but also lost on appeal.

Other *reos* who were not so hated by the Left, and not persecuted in the courts by generally leftist district attorneys, had an easier time of getting home arrest, even if they killed someone—unlike John, who simply defended himself and killed no one. The key difference was that John was a Christian libertarian activist with a web presence and a clear contempt for communism. It was unusual for judges to speak to *reos* as judges Pinto and Torres had done with John. It seemed obvious that they were sympathetic to his plight and wanted to help, but later it would be seen that such was not the case.

Judge Torres, at one point, called John's first lawyer and rightly questioned his competency. The truth is that most lawyers, perhaps except the very highly paid ones, could care less about their clients. They just look for a way to get paid. Consequently, *reos* frequently changed lawyers in the hope of finding a better one. In the end, most found little difference in that they ended up found guilty of some crime or felt compelled to accept a plea bargain in order to avoid more serious penalties. The system was absolutely sickening and disgusting. John realized, like Miami, Rubén, Manuel, and many others, that Injustice was built into the system and, again, that "money answers everything" (Ecclesiastes 10:19). Men were regularly sacrificed in order to ensure the considerable incomes of many bureaucrats and professionals associated with the judicial process.

Other than *módulos* 107, 108, and 118, there was no light or electric power at night, and *reos* quickly come to realize that the judicial process is equally dark—a quagmire of sadism, lies, hopelessness, and greed. Chilean prisons seemed to John more medieval than modern. Human rights take a backseat to corruption, abuse, indifference, and the lethargy of the *gendarmes*. *Reos* are murdered and seriously injured. Some cut themselves intentionally just to get the attention of the guards. John saw many repeat offenders and *machucados en tránsito* with terribly scarred torsos and arms, often like so many stripes on an Indian warrior. 118 was indeed relatively better than other *módulos*, with second-best being the hard-to-enter psych ward (*módulo* 117), maximum security (*módulo* 107), and perhaps the cellblock of the non-aggressive *hermanos* (brethren) or Evangelicals (*módulo* 103), all of which feature unattractive aspects. Together with 118, they comprise about 10% of the total prison population. The rest live in varying degrees of inhumane and unconscionable circumstances.

In *módulo* 104, for instance, there are no functioning toilets. The *reos* get their bags of bread in the morning, eat the bread, then poop in the bag and throw it over the fence or out the windows for the *mozo* to clean up. It is the worst *módulo* in the prison, along with 114, 115, and perhaps

105. Men live in varying degrees of fear in those places, and most are addicted to drugs. In some *módulos*, like 107 and 108, as Raúl (the elder) told John, the *pacos* intentionally cause the *machucados* to suffer. They soak the *reos*' foam mattresses during the 90 minutes of *patio* time so that the *reos* have to suffer with a wet mattress for the next twenty-two and a half hours.

Even though the *gendarmes* come and fumigate from time to time (twice in John's experience over a year), *reo*'s live with horrible biting insects in most of the prison. John watched Roberto (bald) use a stick to toss a prisonissued, fire retardant, blue blanket into the dumpster. It contained a huge nest of *chinchas* (bedbugs). The elderly *reo* (age 83) using it, Delfín, had been sleeping with those bugs for months. *Reo*'s are often sick and do not receive proper nutrition, affecting everyone else, just like the mentally ill who are housed with the general population. In many *módulo*'s cells, smoke from drug users is noxious and intolerable.

In 2016, according to published statistics, there were about 42,500 prisoners in Chile or 233 per 100,000 population. (Miami thought the correct figure was close to 50,000.) That compares to 454 per 100,000 population in Russia, 89 in Italy, 91 in Greece, and over 880 in the United States. This figure for Chile is middling in terms of Latin America but much less than the 884 per 100,000 in the United States. Sebastian, who experienced prison in both countries, said that on balance, Chile was better. While the food is better in American jails, gang violence, not having to trade with cash, not being able to wear one's own clothes, and having visitors via telephone behind glass all made life even more miserable than the slate of maladies beleaguering Chilean prisons. At least with nice, corrupt guards, one can get things he needs in Chile, even getting high to escape it all. United States prisons are not so congenial. John was no fan of corruption in general in government, but he had to admit that the corruption in Valparaíso prison was a form of benevolence when it came to living there. Yet, most people had no idea what was required to survive in jail.

Chile's attempt to privatize some of its prisons (*cárceles concesionadas*) has not achieved wonderful results either. The food is worse, being apportioned with less meat on the tray. Worse yet, little food is permitted to enter *de la calle*. Visitors can bring things like chips, ham and cheese sandwiches, and cookies. But they cannot bring meat and salad. Instead of steel grill bunks, cells contain two or three beds made of solid concrete in *concessionada* prisons. As bad as medical attention is in Valparaíso's penitentiary, the provision in private prisons is worse. The electrical circuits are better distributed, however, with one breaker for four cells, compared to six in 118, making usage arrangements easier between the *reos* and, as Mujica pointed out with respect to his time served in Puerto Montt prison, there is much less banging on the steel doors.

There are private prisons in Santiago, Colina, La Serena, and Rancagua, too. Yet, whether public or private, the prisons in Chile provide economic opportunity for many. Prisoners are considered to be a consumption nucleus (or *nucleo de consumo*), in effect non-citizens who are dependent completely on the state and cost the taxpayer 760,000 pesos (about 1,000 USD) per month per prisoner. The average income in Valparaíso is 650,000 pesos per month, making onlookers question where the money is going given the inhumane conditions. The efficiency of scale economies alone must be present in such squalid, inhumane, and quasi-medieval prison facilities. Nevertheless, no official in Chile has undertaken a serious study of the situation. Apparently, there is much to be gained by many actors directly or indirectly involved with the judicial branch and prison system. As "money answers everything," John mused, reform is unlikely when the

monied elite like that *status quo*, the public is largely ignorant of the injustice and inhumanity of the system, and the prisoners who do care are helpless and powerless to act.

Chapter VI

Wisdom and Madness and Folly

John listened intently to Sergio relating his experience as a fireman and talking about his international travel while in the Chilean Navy, not to mention how he had been used by a lesbian in France to produce a child (his daughter, now living in some French town called Lozer). John never had any reason to doubt what he was told. Mauricio, however, told John that Sergio lied and had merely vicariously lived others' experiences. The same thing was true with respect to Sergio's cattle ranch down south near Cochrane, in the remote 11th Region. Nevertheless, Sergio's counsel about doing cleaning or other services in 118 to avoid getting booted out was valid.

All *machucados* had to do some cleaning work in order to receive a good or very good conduct score and thus be eligible for benefits, like early parole or partial parole on the weekends. But, never mind the possible benefits, some accused in 118 faced growing and continual threats. For example, Karim's 6th through 8th criminal charges were added on by the district attorney. Indeed, it seemed like new charges were added every month for the four months that he was in 118. He seemed to always be being arraigned for something new—yet he took it all in stride.

Videoconferencing with lawyers and for court hearings using Zoom started in late March (because of Coronavirus) and continued thereafter. No one had to go to the courthouse, nor did they have to take off their clothes, squat, and put on ankle and wrist chains, or wear a yellow vest.

Yet, there were still other friends to bear. Mauricio, more obsessive-compulsive than Sergio (both likely SJ “guardians” in Myers-Briggs temperament testing), commonly answered a simple “yes” or “no” question by asking a question instead. This mannerism was both very annoying and insulting. He thought he was so intelligent that he had to teach others. Yet, he only had a technical degree in bookkeeping. Other inmates were more artful. Karim was a big joker, perhaps a clown, always trying some angle to trick someone. John never spoke negatively about anyone, but one day in March 2020, he was heckling Karim (in his presence) about his woodworking skills and why it was better, at least in John's case, to write a book than to try to be a mediocre craftsman-like Karim. Pea-brained Aníbal, who was very good at woodworking and who was sitting at the next table, mistakenly thought that John was criticizing him and the other artisans. Even after John confronted him and witnesses confirmed that he was talking about Karim and not Aníbal, from that day on, the latter held a grudge against John. The whole uproar was an example of the petty, smallminded nonsense that occurs in prison. Consequently, John never joked around again. Even though atheist Karim was clearly a criminal, John liked him and rather enjoyed talking with him. He was one of the few in 118 from the upper-middle class, and John had something in common with him politically. However, he did not tolerate Karim trying to cheat at chess.

As a good work to please “the man upstairs,” Miami always did lots of cleaning in the *en tránsito* cells and the yard. He washed clothes, too, for 2,000 pesos per bucket or bag full. John usually gave him 3,000 pesos for those items his wife did not wash (like sheets, which could not

reenter if taken out, without written permission). Later, Mauricio washed those incidentals for no charge other than detergent. But John and many others always appreciated Miami's service. He washed clothing better than Argentine *Che*. Hauling the garbage from 118—one wide, street-use trash container and four smaller ones and—was accomplished by five or six *reos*, accompanied by the *mozo* and sometimes the *gendarme*, usually once or twice per week. Typically, the *reo* slaves chosen to haul it 300 meters to the compactor were Alexander, Ismael, Diego, José, and sometimes John. (However, when the *suboficial mayor* González was present, he would not allow John or Alexis to take the trash lest they be attacked by the other inmates.) They climbed the machine's ramp, and then one or two *reos* dumped the trash into the machine. A very compliant group they were!

Visiting the nurse, Sandra, was not easy. The *suboficial mayor* only brought an inmate to see her or the doctor on Thursdays, unless he was really sick (since Thursday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon was the allotted time for 118). Sandra had been burned by her *gendarme* husband, according to Sergio, since he left her for another man—a *gendarme*. Henceforth, she hated men. So one had to be very sweet and nice to Sandra to get bug bite cream or flu medicine. One could also ask her for a special favor and take one's blood pressure or weigh oneself, but it was not done regularly. One could go to the paramedic's station or hospital infirmary (as it was called) as well, where Mauricio worked, to get a shot for back pain or to take one's blood pressure, but a *reo* often had to wait a while. They said that blood pressure had to be taken after 10 minutes' rest. So the *reo* got to watch the male nurse play solitaire for a bit. The doctor rarely showed up in Sandra's office, and John's experience, and when he did he gave bad advice at times—at least according to John's cardiologist in Santiago—especially when it came to an understanding what particular drug does and which ones should be taken for a particular ailment. He told John to buy from a private pharmacy outside the prison where the drug quality was better.

Raúl (the elder) liked to cook the round white bread issued to each man daily in the dining room mini-oven, and thus turned them into crackers (after removing the soft middle prior to baking). John also enjoyed that "treat." The food was so bad, and John was able to lose considerable weight by going hungry—between two and three belt notches. The white bread or crackers were purely bad quality food, yet it was preferable to the stews, algae sludge, and most other *ranchos*—especially when made into crackers or eaten with a slice of cheese purchased from the kiosk. Sliced ham, sugar-added juice, soda pop, chocolate, cookies, and some chips could also be purchased there. These snacks ended up being a staple for John.

Further, considering his predicament, John recollected how things were when he first arrived. His first night was spent with Helmut. On the second floor, which was called the first floor because it was the first floor with cells. The next day, *suboficial mayor* González put him in a thirdfloor cell (number 14) by himself, where he stayed a few weeks alone. Then González brought Sergio to the cell. Shortly thereafter, bug bites began to appear on John's feet and toes. After a few days, the skin of the affected area turned hard like an alligator's skin. People on the *patio* immediately blamed Sergio, who also received the brunt of homosexual jokes even though he was straight.

Sergio's previous cell, number 12 (two doors or four meters down the row), wherein he had lived with Raúl (the younger) and his noisy sleep apnea machine for over a year, had recently been fumigated because it was infested with biting insects. Evidently, Sergio brought one or

more critters with him when he moved. John was still using the government issued, blue, fire-retardant blankets that *chinchas* (bedbugs) and other bugs like to live in and from there attack men's arms and hands. John had dismissed the possibility that the bugs got him in his corner of the *patio*, where he played chess daily since he had been there prior to Sergio's arrival as a cellmate without being bit. 118 was somewhat special in that all other modules are said to be teaming with biting insects, producing a horrid medieval and torturous existence that directly assaulted human rights.

John was convinced that no matter how bad the alleged human rights record under the military government headed by Augusto Pinochet was, the leftist-inspired jail system is far worse since it affected over 42,500 people daily rather than 1,296 killed or missing, and several thousand supposedly tortured over seventeen years. Remember that it was not just bugs but also bad food, forced cohabitation with drug and cigarette smokers, and foul-smelling fart generators who created the foul environment, not to mention beds that cause back pain, poor medical care, and other abusive conditions, that contributed to the torment.

Getting cream for the bug bites was hardly easy, requiring waiting until the next available Thursday morning and hoping the nurse had something to give the *reo*, including pills for the inflammation. Supplies often ran low since so many *machucados* suffered from the same ailment. John had almost no more bug problems once he moved into cell number 10 with Mauricio, other than a few bites on his arms.

He also had *Che* clean the cell with chloride twice a week for 1,000 pesos each time. *Che* told people he was being paid 3,000 pesos for the six-minute job since some accused John of enslaving him. But it was a voluntary transaction, and *Che* did not want to lose his job since he received no money during visitation. He instead washed clothes, cleaned cells, and made wooden objects, which wholesalers bought from the prisoners to sell in Viña del Mar's open-air markets or tourist stands. John was not willing to pay more, and both parties were satisfied but envious, resentful onlookers tried to stir up trouble on account of the deal. They (Aníbal and maybe Sergio) even convinced one fill-in *gendarme* that John's deal with *Che* was bad, who, in turn, forced John to go to the *patio* in his pajamas and mop up the greywater-wet floor of the *en tránsito*'s two shower stalls and two toilets. That *gendarme*'s name was Cabo Rigoberto Castro. John had to obey him and never hesitated. Seeing his plight, Miami and Alexis pitched in and helped him get the job done. It was not such a hard job, but the conditions were unpleasant. And Castro became John's nemesis for most of the time he spent in 118.

Every two or three months, power would be cut off to the entire prison, stopping its well water system also. Sometimes many hours would pass without water or the ability to flush the toilet or clean one's cell. Those with bottles of water, juice, soda pop had something to drink, but most did not, especially outside of 118. The *en tránsito* cells almost always had jugs of water, so they were okay other than toileting. Those unfortunate residents never had electric power. The only thing electrical left functioning worked off of battery power, and one had to hope that his batteries were charged.

With lots of men in each cell, sewage quickly became a smelly problem. However, in 118, with only two or sometimes three men per cell, conditions were better but hardly pleasant. The first time it happened to John, he was bunking with Sergio, and the outage lasted all evening until

morning. The second time he was in the cell with Mauricio, who is not yet back from his *mozo*-semi-slavery post at the paramedic's station, that is, the infirmary and the outage was only for half an hour.

Everyone, every day, had to bring down to the yard whatever they might use during the day: dish soap, hand soap, toilet paper, utensils, cup, bowl, plate, and a small container in which *rancho* or *dieta* could be slapped into. A chess set, books, pens, paper, notebooks all had to be taken down, too. Sometimes John brought snacks like cookies, chocolate, cheese, or raisins, just in case the *rancho* and *dieta* were so bad that he would be left without anything to eat. Eventually, he would bring down a sandwich. Just in case anyone in 118 forgot something, the guard or food server would usually allow him a quick trip back upstairs to get it—especially if it was his money since he might buy something with it and leave the *paco* with his cut.

It's amazing how much difference a little spice makes. John noticed that Mauricio had a bag of oregano. "Is that allowed in through what visitors bring?" He replied, "No." Obviously, it looks similar to marijuana when crushed and thus is prohibited; it must be smuggled in another way, like through Mauricio's nurse friend Panchito, who worked in the prison "hospital" (paramedic station or infirmary). The few rooms with patient beds were hardly on par with the meagerest independent doctor's office in the United States, and John always thought it laughable whenever anyone called the place a hospital. But, in reality, it was the main medical care facility in the prison, further evincing the squalid conditions where the prisoners' lived.

Mauricio threw salt on the slugs before picking them up with toilet paper and tossing them into the toilet. John never saw the logic of the first step and skipped it. Why so many slugs appeared was uncertain, but Mauricio guessed it was related to the dampness and the difficulty of keeping water from spilling out of the tiny cell sink onto the floor. John and Mauricio acquired electric shavers through Mauricio's nurse friend Panchito to lessen the water overflow that occurred during shaving. But from what remained from brushing teeth, washing dishes, and washing hands and face, it was not enough to halt the slugs. Curiously, in John's previous cell, there were no slugs.

What was allowed into the prison, John found, was arbitrarily and capriciously determined and enforced. Stuffed potatoes, even if sliced into various sections, so the gendarmes could see there were no drugs baked inside, were sometimes prohibited. At other times, maybe 80% in John's experience, they were allowed. The same was true with potatoes with chives and mayonnaise. Sometimes the guard would not let them in unless the mayonnaise was entered separately, but most of the time, there was no problem. Salad dressings did not enter the prison, but oil, vinegar, and spices could so long as it was put into a new and clear bottle originally used to hold dish soap or a bottle formerly housing artificial sweetener or corn oil could be used.

Store-bought cakes and pizza could be brought in, but homemade baked goods could not, lest drugs are included inside them. In general, one had to include a flimsy plastic knife (other knives were not allowed) for the *gendarme* to cut cooked food open. Even still, he might be too lazy to do so and just prohibit its entry instead, easier for him. Any dark-colored liquids were not allowed, from shampoo to soda pop, lest they contain dissolved drugs. This would create an unwelcome increase in supply and reduce the profits of the *gendarmes* participating in the drug business.

Despite this proclivity in trafficking by some and Pamela's consternation with a few of those who inspected the food bags she brought, John was a great fan of the *gendarmes*, who were always supportive of him and respectful (except for Castro and maybe Bustos on one occasion). They were generally nice people who enjoyed chatting it up with John and appreciated the knowledge and skills he could offer. They knew that John was not like other *reos* and that they shared much in common with him politically. Accordingly, John never had an unkind word to say about the vast majority of them, whether they worked in the prison or were stationed at the courthouse.

Chapter VII

But Money Answers Everything

The *pacos* had many ways to increase their salaries in prison: sales of food, cellular phones, small appliances, and private or upgraded rooms, as well as drugs. But they also sold the privilege to be “classified” into a CET (a study and work center), which provided semi-liberty. The cost ranged from 1 to 2 million pesos per transaction, depending on the jail and circumstances. As John and everyone else knew (other than newcomers), “money answers everything” (Ecclesiastes 10:19). As a libertarian, he was not bothered that a price was put on such conveniences. Indeed, it was better that they were offered than not supplied at all. John did not live under any illusions about the pure, supposedly publicly spirited nature of any government employee. Economic theory suggested that *gendarmes* would act to maximize their utility like any other economic actor. The romantic or quixotic view of the state and its actors was quickly dismantled before the eyes of any prisoner, who all lived better because such informal markets existed.

Almost once a week, on average, the wash (gray) water from a leak in cells number four and five created a minor flood in the dining room. After *reos* took out the chairs, swept or pushed the water out, and after the floor dried, the chairs were put back, and the room was ready for use. Usually, no Clorox was applied, making John wonder about the level of hygiene. Indeed, he got sick several times during his first year in prison, while he rarely ever did over ten years living at home with Pamela (illnesses during trips abroad excluded).

The ping-pong table was warped, and, eventually, the metal supports snapped and had to be replaced by four foldable sawhorses made of crate wood. *Reos* pay 2,000 pesos per crate to their fellow prisoners that unload them (the delivery truck people donate them). The table net supports also failed, as did the net itself, and had to be replaced by another ugly innovation. Karim was the undisputed ping pong champion of 118. Manuel and Ismael were runnersup, followed by Rubén, Alexis, and a few other regulars.

John longed for intelligent conversation, which was hard to find in jail. Raúl (the elder) had an opinion about everything and talked incessantly, which was not always a good substitute for intelligence. John got sick of his racism and Jews-are-responsible-for-world’s-problems rhetoric. Nevertheless, he did have some knowledge and things in common with John, for example, mistrust for the state, seeing big business as being in bed with the state, television as a means of propaganda, experiences from world travel, etc. But in terms of religion, leftism, racism, and other key social beliefs, the two men could not have been further apart. Rubén was a bit better, a former *gendarme* without a higher education but with an interest in learning and listening. Miami also knew a lot, especially with respect to airplanes, logistics, travel experiences, and the Chilean Navy. He wanted to live in Italy when he retired, giving him and John a point in common. Karim knew something about free-market economics and policy but dominated the conversation so much that it was hard to get in a word edgewise. Ismael was obviously intelligent (most chess players are) but had little higher education and experience, although he did well with his Evangelical principles and reading a few chapters of a book that John lent him on the Christian Worldview, *Verdad Total*, by Nancy Piercy that a visitor brought to John. That visitor’s name was Baptist Pastor Obed Rupertus from Santiago, who had been the pastor where John and his

wife attended church in Santiago until 2014. Beyond these men, some of whom left a lot to be desired, there were few and perhaps no opportunities for intellectual conversation. *Che*, Alexis, and Waldo had some interest in listening and gaining information, which was virtuous. But they hardly rose to the level of colleagues or even informed conversationalists.

Everything in 118 changed on April 7, 2020. Raúl (the elder) and Alexis were sent back to *módulo* 107, where they came from. They had been awaiting repairs to be done to 107 and thus had been moved into 118. John, too, probably should have been in 107 for the “public connotation” surrounding his case, but the court had apparently specified that he go to 118. Roberto (*Viejo Chico*) also finished his term and left. Eighteen *rancho mozos* or other workers are from other *módulos*, who worked all day outside 118, moved in. As a result, every cell was filled to capacity (three prisoners each).

Che (the Argentine) moved in with John and Mauricio and squeezed into the top bunk. He had no money, so he agreed to clean and cook as his share so he could enjoy food *de la calle* and other benefits. All paid for private sales came to an end. For instance, Manuel and Karim moved in with Rubén; Miami moved in with Sergio and Ricardo. All prisoners with conditional benefits (weekends or Sundays at home) were moved to 101 in order to contain potential Coronavirus contagion within that module alone. The rest from 101, which was a bad *módulo*, were sent to other *módulos*, including 118. consequently, at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the faces in 118’s building, and to a lesser extent its *patio*, were new. The changes produced considerable chaos, with things being strewn in the hallways until the next day. Supposedly, as soon as the pandemic subsided, all would revert to normal.

In addition, all visitation was stopped. Regular or conjugal, starting on April 10th. So John and others would not be seeing their wives, girlfriends, loved ones, and friends for many months. However, visitors would be allowed to leave bags of food and clothing (called *encomienda*) on the same Saturday visitation day, and the guards would deliver the goods to the *reos*. No money could be delivered, except through the official window designated for that purpose. The next day orders came to 118 to take down the name and phone number of one visitor from each *reo* in order to facilitate a videoconference with them instead of a live visit. John thought it was all overkill since there was so little contagion (at that point) in the regional prison system.

Since April 3, 2020, midday, John had been stricken with a serious problem with his right eye. His field division had now appeared like an aquarium full of black spots and circles with many web-like things moving in front of his view like so many amoebas. Often, these things looked like the airborne shapes made by the simultaneous flight of hundreds of blackbirds. In addition, at times, he would see bright flashlights or light beams, like seven or eight boat signals going off at once. He shared all this information with the prison generalist doctor the next morning prior to and after visitation. John’s wife was rightly concerned, as specialists outside prison had indicated that John’s retina could be separating from his eye, or other things could be occurring, like a TIA, stroke, or diabetes onset. They suggested he go to the emergency room immediately after seeing any flashlights. However, that was not to be. The prison doctor and nurses on Sunday mocked the idea and, for ‘treatment,’ just put his own prescription drops into his eyes (prescribed for his macular degeneration and small cataracts that reduced the vision in his left eye by 20% the year before). Too, some gauze was taped over his right eye, leaving him with only blurry vision in his left. On Monday, he returned to the prison infirmary, and the generalist doctor wrote

up an urgent *interconsulta* (referral) for the local public hospital (not good quality) where the wait for consultation could be a week or two (although Karim said 540 days was the average regional wait!). John simply waited and suffered in his semi-medieval torture chamber run by obviously contented, sadistic medical staff bound by Draconian *gendarme* regulations. Meanwhile, his wife went to work on Monday afternoon, contacting the public defender, who put in an urgent request to the court of appeals to issue an order (up to a three-day wait) to take John to see an ophthalmologist, specifying his preference for a private clinic. If issued, the *gendarmes* would have another four or five days to comply. In the meantime, John waited, in danger of losing his sight on account of the barbaric protocols and process, keeping his eye shut, hoping for the best, and praying for healing. Unfortunately, little help would ever arrive.

John watched as the *chinche* or bedbug crawled up the inmate's back, standing next to him, silently pointing out the intrusion to other onlookers who watched and laughed. The 23 men had been jammed into a 3-meter by 3-meter cell next to 118's building, awaiting their hearings in court via video conference (Zoomcast) on April 14, 2020. All had been frisked and handcuffed to make a good showing in the virtual courtroom. John had to take out his shoelaces, remove his belt and wristwatch, and hand over his wallet with money in it—even though he had been told by the *paco* who brought him to the staging area that no such thing would happen since it was merely a video conference. Normally, when no Coronavirus threat exists, all clothing is removed, and shoelaces are thrown away before dressing and putting on an ankle and wrist chain combination restraint, euphemistically called *medios de seguridad* (safety measures). But video conferencing was supposed to remove such vicissitudes and eliminate the need to cram into a nearly windowless sweltering paddy wagon or bus to transport the *reos* to their court hearings.

In those transports, only six or seven got to sit on the bench, while the others had to stand sometimes for hours. Generally, there was no room to walk either, except for a few minutes when a *gendarme* with an exhaust-emitting sprayer sprayed the floors with chloride in the adjacent empty cells. Those cells could have been used to hold some of the 23, but no *paco* was willing to be so nice. John did not understand why the *pacos* were generally nice, but when they were transporting prisoners with chains, they became so cruel (but not generally to John). All had to be crammed together without face masks, while some *machucados* coughed, spit, or sneezed. They were herded into an empty cell while the other was sprayed, then herded back. When John finally got before the judge, who asked his name, he told her that he was speaking to her from a torture chamber. “He also may need eye surgery,” he said, and she complied by reiterating the order to take him to the hospital. That order was never completely fulfilled.

April 15, 2020, was an eventful day in 118. Roberto (bald) was freed and placed on probation. Lorenzo (Pedro) was set free as charges against him were dropped. That evening many *reos* were heard banging on cell doors and shouting their congratulations. Earlier, John returned from seeing the eye doctor and still had blurry vision due to the residual effects of the drops used during his eye exam. It was getting late out on the *patio*, so rather than start a game of chess, John asked the other evangelicals if they wanted to have a short prayer meeting. Seeing it was Wednesday, and Lorenzo would soon be leaving the group, the others agreed, and they read the Bible and prayed. They even had a considerable theological discussion since the *suboficial mayor* did not order them to their cells right away. Just before the service,

Rubén and Ismael asked, “So what did the doctor say, John?” He said that he had to go back for

a checkup in a month and that the gel in his right eye was separating from the retina, not the retina from the eye, was simply a result of getting older (often seen in people over age 55). Eventually, his brain would eliminate the spots and lights he was seeing (which was still not true by November), even without an eye patch. But, he warned, if the spots, circles, clots, clumps, and lights increase (for instance, from 10 to 15 flashlight events per day to 30 to 40), he should return right away. Later on, John's urologist and cardiologist in Santiago, both of whom were married to ophthalmologists who offered opinions, agreed that the diagnosis was probably correct. That same day, John saw well over 30 flashes of light. Yet all he could do was await the next court order (already issued) to make it through to the *gendarme's* bureaucracy so that it obligated them to take John to a private eye clinic in Vina del Mar instead of to the Van Buren public hospital in Valparaiso again. Doing so never happened. Like so many other sick *reos*, he had to wait and hope for the best. The headaches did subside at least, and he continued to read and write a little bit.

Cell phones are not allowed in the prison because prisoners use them to run scams on people on the outside, according to what he had been told. Mauricio replied, "That's not true. It's because the *gendarmes* do not want the *reos* to be able to record drug deals with them or take incriminating photos." That's the real reason John thought; that explanation made more sense. Yet, over time John realized that both reasons were true.

"Is it true, Karim, that you pay the powerful *reos* with cigarettes so that they don't kill you?" John inquired. Rubén said that Karim had some problem with a homosexual enemy before being imprisoned, who is related to a prisoner in another *módulo*. Karim thus had a reason to fear. Paying a few thousand pesos for cheap smokes daily made sense. Manuel and Rubén agreed. John asked Karim to read Philippians 1:20-23. "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." For the moment, John figured that dying was not the worst thing that could happen to him. Going to heaven, even after being murdered, seemed highly preferable to his current predicament in 118.

"*Che* (the Argentine) has to go," said Mauricio. "He has not even bought a roll of toilet paper but continues to use what we supply. He claims he is too poor to contribute, but he still manages to buy 20 to 30 cigarettes per day at perhaps 20,000 pesos per week." John had no problem sharing, especially with poor people, but he agreed that it was unjust that he had to pay 50,000 pesos per week between him and his wife, while *Che* used his money to support his smoking habit. Mauricio said, "I am going to speak to the *suboficial mayor* about kicking him out of our cell. He lies, he borrows money and does not repay it on time (or at all). He thinks that by doing all the cleaning and cooking, he is even with us. He consumes at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of the food and drink and uses our items of infrastructure for free: electric kettle, oven, bathing bucket, bug spray, plates and utensils, plastic storage containers, soap, shampoo, and hangers. He keeps making excuses for not installing his own shelf as promised, using ours instead." John had nothing against the Argentine but had to agree with Mauricio's logic.

Still, John had the courtesy to confront *Che* about the inequity. On April 19, 2020, he responded

by saying that he would buy his own toilet paper, soap, shampoo, etc., and only clean twice a week. Yet the next day, he still used all the implements belonging to John and Mauricio. He seemed a nice enough guy but turned out to be just another leech, even if he did not eat John's food any longer. Karim also admonished *Che* after hearing the story, but that confrontation only served to infuriate and agitate the Argentine. He should have appreciated all he had and just bought toilet paper and cleaning or bathing supplies for the cell. But he lacked the logic to see the benefits he was about to lose. He exemplified the tragic results of the decisions made by many inmates.

Most visitors were female, and that is one reason why women were so favored and respected by inmates. While visitation was suspended in April 2020, women lined up to deliver two (sometimes three) bags of food, drink, and clothes through the *encomienda* system. The line formed around 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, and around 11:45 to 11:55, the *pacos* told everyone who was already in line (usually 35 people or so) to come inside so they could close the door. Anyone arriving later did not get to deliver their goods. Other *módulos* had different days in which *encomienda* were brought. Saturday was used for *módulos* 118 and 101 primarily. So the women had to plan well. They also wore masks usually to avoid catching Coronavirus while in close proximity with others.

Speaking of food, some “wise” nutritional bureaucrat decided that John should not have vegetables since the prison doctor earlier decided he was too fat and thus cut fresh fruit out of his diet. The veggies arriving in *rancho* had to be washed and then taken from the muck, but John still wondered if they were worth eating due to resulting diarrhea.” It is better to eat the vegetables or salad that my wife brings, even if they only last three to five days.” Wondering if lack of vitamins was affecting his eye, he sought a way for the lawyer to bring a bottle of multivitamins in since the *pacos* prohibited them. “I have apparently not lost any more weight in March or April 2020,” mused John. This fact struck him as odd since he was often hungry and did not eat prison meals much, other than the few breakfast items. “Perhaps my metabolism has dropped?” he thought. Then again, his exercise level was minimal, and cookies were plentiful.

Chapter VIII

And After That, They Go to the Dead

Mauricio watched with horror as the *machucado* with the two spear wounds to his chest expired. He had walked to the infirmary by himself. But the staff could do little with their limited resources, and the *reo* died before Mauricio's eyes. It was April 16, 2020, and the deceased was from a bad *módulo*. Mauricio had already seen five dead in four months working as a clean-up man in the infirmary. He figured there would be at least eight dead in 2020.

As time went by, John realized that the only people he could confide in were Mauricio, Rubén, Miami, and Ismael. (Later on, he would have some doubts even about Mauricio, but at this point, he seemed trustworthy.) John had seen Karim change and become more comfortable as a criminal. "He's a clown," said his cellmate Rubén. John saw that his affections were turning tending toward the class of men in 118 that were least elegant, educated, or impressive. Waldo, too, seemed to be acting like some of the younger criminals now. Manuel was moody and sometimes a recluse. His cellmate Rubén said he had even kicked him hard once under the dining room table. "It almost came down to chess," mused John, "the best players are the most loyal educated *reos*." Mauricio did not play much, but daily showed that he was not too different in his thinking and actions, so perhaps he should be included. While Karim and Waldo could not, Mauricio did not seem like a criminal. Miami always remained at a trustworthy level. John grew disenchanted with Alexander and Alejandro's lack of commitment to participate in the Evangelical services and thus their overall trustworthiness. "But what should I expect in prison?" he thought. In general, John was not hanging around with a good crowd, and he knew it. Whether barbers or adulterers, they were not the best counselors, especially those under 40. "Where did you learn to cut hair?" John asked Diego, the 22-year-old ex-cop and right-wing activist who had taken over the job after Roberto (bald) was paroled. In my obligatory military service for one year plus an additional year. "It is hard to do a poor job cutting men's hair short."

"I have three women with whom I have sex," declared 30-year-old Karim. Sometimes he said stuff like that just to annoy John, who wore his Christian faith on his sleeves. At other times he just liked to boast. John wondered why some men put such large stock in one vagina over another. Did one really feel different or better than another? While breast size could make up some objective difference, one vagina had to be just as good as another. The whole debate seemed ridiculous to John. Objectifying women served little end, and the quest for multiple conquests seemed even vainer. One woman brought sufficient trouble into a man's life. Why compounded by adding others? John thought: "Sure, a good woman brings great joy, companionship, pleasure, children, and warmth to a man's home, and women are neither worse nor better than men. They're just different, and I like that they are different, but one is enough. Life has enough problems as it is. Why add more?"

Then one had also to consider death or the destruction of property when considering what kinds of people one deals with in prison. "They broke the last community television in the dining hall," exclaimed Mauricio, "so I have less interest in contributing to the new one; besides, I am in the infirmary all day now, seven days a week." John had contributed 5,000 pesos once before when Karim was trying to raise enough cash to buy one. But not enough people contributed, so the money was returned to him. When a television appeared, apparently paid for by Rubén, Manuel,

and Karim, John was asked to contribute after the fact. He replied, “If visitations were not suspended due to Coronavirus and more cash was coming in regularly, I would be happy to do so, but as things stand now in April 2020, my participation will have to wait.”

While John was not a great partner for buying community property line televisions, he was good at keeping men oriented. “What time is it *gringo*?” Waldo often inquired from his patio seat near the card table. Few *reos* had wristwatches, as an *escrito* was required. Besides John, only Manuel, Miami, and Rubén had one out on the *patio*. John was always happy to comply, of course, with such requests.

Then there were some *reos* who were not reliable at all, generally good for nothing and untrustworthy. *Che* often asked people for small loans, promising to repay on a certain day but never doing so. “Don’t lend him money,” ordered Mauricio, but John and Ismael were always willing to lend him 1,000 or 2,000 pesos, it seemed. Other *reos* showed their social insignificance and uselessness by being careless slobs. “This is a pigpen,” John remarked to Carlos regarding the *en tránsito* cells he and others had to clean. Carlos, a polite and generally reliable guy, who had filmed his 8-year-old daughter licking his penis and then him licking her genitalia, replied somewhat ironically that, “It was just incredible to see how some people live.” Floors were swept, food was thrown away, water jugs filled, tea bottles collected, blankets put on beds, and floors mopped with chloride. Call it slave-maid service: from pedophiles to Ph.D.s at your service! As John was told repeatedly, in prison, everyone is equal.

There was, however, some good counsel from trustworthy sources that went around from time to time. “Do not speak publicly to people about corrupt deals offered by the *pacos*,” Ismael suggested. “Never let them think you are a threat. Always be agreeable with them. They give you a good conduct score, which will allow a sentence reduction of two months per year served.” Yet others would never rise to the level of a good counselor. *Che* was simply hated by most other *machucados* in 118. He was kicked out of the *bodega* (workshop) by both Carlos and Aníbal, who had sycophant credit with the *pacos*. He henceforth worked on his wooden Jeeps with a few tools from a metal *patio* bench and a cardboard box.

The reality of life in jail, both in terms of acquaintances and circumstances, was manifest while doing daily chores. John scrubbed his dishes with a chunk of foam mattress over what he called the *pesebre* (manger) or *patio* water basin. “It’s amazing, too,” he thought, “all the things prisoners do with government-issued mattresses.” Anything “free” in prison is either eaten or destroyed. A new mattress can be ripped up for fun, to make a sponge, to serve as a workout pad on the *patio* floor, to pad a small compartment used to hide a cell phone in one’s cell, to bust up and be used to fill a pillow or cushion case, to serve as a paint or varnish brush, to serve as fill for a boxing bag, seat, or bench press, and to block cold air from entering one’s cell window. 118 was hardly pretty, but it was functional largely due to such innovation. Circumstances simply did not permit one to run out to the local store to buy things, so innovation was important.

There were other examples, too. The funnel-shaped clear plastic roll ending in a paint bucket inside the dining room collected wastewater that leaked from the cells above. It was an unsightly reminder of the general filth of the jail and that things never quite got repaired. It wasted space, and the bucket had to be emptied daily into the sewer. It reminded John of living in a recreational vehicle and having to utilize a dump station. Still, it represented more innovation needed to

survive.

Then there was the general unpleasantness that came from living with low-class men. John was fed up with inhaling smelly farts as he lay trapped in his bunk. He tried to ascertain whether it was Mauricio or freeloader *Che* who was responsible as he got up to open the little window in the cell door and sucked down some ‘fresh’ air. (He would later deduce that *Che* was the culprit.) Living in a cell with two other men is disgusting at times, just as if one lived with them in a large bathroom. Mauricio often sprayed perfume or chloride or lit incense to hide the smell. *Che* sprayed Raid, which John had to inhale as well as it fell from the ceiling area where *Che* stayed (top bunk). *Che* got the brunt of mosquitoes and other insects crawling on the ceiling. It all added to the 16 to 18 hours of unpleasantness each day. “*Che* has to go,” stated Mauricio. “He earns money all day by making wooden jeeps, washing other people’s clothes, and cleaning cells. But he had not contributed anything to the cell during April 2020.” He used John’s electric tea kettle ten times more than John did (*Che* was addicted to both cigarettes and *mate*, Argentine tea). He used Mauricio’s oven, stools (one of which he broke), and table. He used other shelves while promising to install his own (he always had an excuse for not doing so: lack of screws, lack of drill, etc.). He used others’ toilet paper, soap, and shampoo. He did a little cleaning and repair of John’s sandals that came unglued twice. But in general, he was a leach and a parasite. Instead of spending his money on cell needs, he bought cigarettes, *mate* tea leaves, and sugar by leaching off John and Mauricio; he thus annoyed them both. What he complained of other people he practiced himself. Rubén said that most others in 118 did not hate him because he was an Argentine, but rather because he was a liar who never kept his word, frequently asking for advances or loans so he could buy cigarettes, etc. Mauricio and John later found evidence that he stole items from them, too, probably sold to feed his addictions. He was simply not a good cellmate and had to go.

Sometimes even not-so-low-class had a hard time getting along in cramped quarters. Rubén, Karim, and Manuel were friends until they began to live together in April 2020. By month-end, Rubén could hardly stand his loud, obnoxious, selfish, clownish new roommates, and tensions began to rise. Rubén had been paying (indirectly) the *suboficial mayor* 50,000 pesos per month for a private room, but no longer, and at month-end, he made his complaint known to the same. Rubén had seniority by a month over at Manuel and thus controlled the rules of the cell. The conflicts subsided among the wealthiest cell in 118 at that moment in time, but the animosity and hard feelings did not. That would take time to work out. So, the *suboficial mayor* accepted Rubén’s offer to pay once again in order to live alone, and the other two moved down to floors.

In light of all the disarray and colorful happenings, John decided that he should be “redeeming the time” (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). He had taken a couple of courses in Italian in 2012 and decided to pick up where he left off to better himself and prepare for the future. The others, like Miami, Rubén, and Ismael, were obviously curious why. But John was different from the other inmates in that he always tried to improve his mind and thinking. No one else did, other than Ismael’s Bible study, and Miami’s nighttime reading also counted. Moreover, some worked out with weights (Diego, Ismael, and *Che*) or jumped rope (Manuel), which was another way to redeem the time. But most did nothing at all for either mind or body. Diego finally began to open up with John about some of his thinking about libertarian ideas, nationalism, Zionism, Freemasonry, and his pacifist notions based on an erroneous understanding of Matthew 5:39’s teaching about turning the other cheek. He was a young man but turned out to be a decent

conversationalist regarding religious, philosophical, and conspiratorial topics.

Turning to more mundane issues, like conjugal visits, Miami explained precisely why he never asked his fiancé to come. “It’s too denigrating for the women. Sometimes she gets a lesbian *gendarme* strip-searching her for the conjugal visit, and so I prefer not to have one. I am almost 64 years old now, and I do not need the intimacy like younger inmates, and thus I am not going to put my future wife through such denigration.” John was 57 but still liked at least some intimacy (which was healthy for any marriage), but more than that, he just liked having an extra three-hour visit with his wife each month instead of playing chess with the brighter criminals. He did not like what his wife had to go through, but it was probably worth it for their mental health’s sake, personal and private conversation, and overall loving relationship.

Yet, there was nothing stable or certain about any internal relationships in prison. After the *reos* were sent to their cells in early April 2020, Alexander was moved to module 107, somewhat surprisingly. With Alejandro’s sudden departure to 112 the day before (after being falsely accused), the Evangelical group was now reduced to two: Ismael and John, with Rubén attending at times. “I was afraid they were going to take you, too, *gringo*,” said Mauricio after returning from work. 118 was mainly for ex-government employees or ex-uniformed men (police, prison guards, armed forces), and John was none of those. He belonged in 107 because of the high level of media coverage surrounding his defensive actions.

But he had several things in his favor. He had good behavior and helped out for one. The *gendarmes* generally liked him, too, and the prison psychologist supposedly said (according to Sergio) that a *gringo* could not make it in another *módulo*. Moreover, John had been told by his original lawyers that the judge (Roberto Pinto) sending him to jail had specified 118 as the destination. Still, things could change, and both John and his many supporters were concerned that he, too, might be sent to 107, and after conviction to 103.

At times *mozo* Aníbal looked out for John with respect to local relationships. “You should not be doing favors for or giving things to the Argentine,” Aníbal counseled John, who replied, “Yeah, he is a freeloader and takes advantage of others.” Once again, *Che* always had money to feed his massive smoking addiction, but in the cell, he bore no costs. Instead, he used what others had. On May 1, 2020, he blew up at John for putting trash, a plastic bottle and cheese wrapper, atop his backpack near the cell door, which he insisted on placing on top of the trash can. Mauricio and John had told him to stop doing this, but the Argentine said he did not want rats and bugs to get in it. They reminded him about his commitment to install a shelf for himself, just as they did for themselves. He said he would but never did, claiming to have neither materials nor a drill with a concrete bit. “Why is it that it is our problem?” They replied, “you can pay someone to do it for you.” But, he refused. At that, he became irate and accused John of not having a very good culture or manners. “That’s a strange response,” said John, “coming from someone who has nothing, contributes nothing, and uses the electric kettle and television of others.”

John and Mauricio had also given him food, *mate* leaves, dish soap, and hand soap. Indeed, they had been very generous with *Che*, and now he was complaining? The Argentine also cited how respectful he had been of the wishes of others by not smoking in the cell, as if that were some great cost he incurred, akin to saying that he had not harmed or bothered the other two men was a tangible benefit to them. John said, “I am going to pay to have your shelf installed.” The

Argentine rebuffed the idea, but John wanted to avoid conflict, thinking about his obligation as a Christian under Romans 12:18. Rubén was willing to sell John a premade metal shelf for 5,000 pesos, and John was game, thinking that the installation would only run a few thousand pesos more. But as it turned out, the man with the drill wanted \$15,000 pesos just to rent it, and Aníbal would charge more on top of that to install it. The total would exceed John's weekly budget for food, etc., so he had to scrap the idea of helping *Che*. Mujica was kind enough to inquire about the tool, but in the end, John had to apologize for taking his time to ask to use it without first knowing the price. He should have asked first.

Mauricio had already asked the *suboficial mayor* to boot *Che* out of the cell, and he said he would speak to the freeloader when he returned in a couple of days. As far as John could tell, *Che* simply denied reality and acted as if others owed him something when they most certainly did not. What Rubén had said regarding what others thought about the lone, irresponsible Argentine was right. *Che*'s assessment was that prior cellmates had used his sugar, toilet paper, etc., mooching off him, was questionable at best, as was his claim that his manners and culture were superior to that of Chileans or John's. He was a hypocrite, practicing precisely the things he preached against. John had tried to help him (even though his wife said she did not trust him after meeting *Che* during 118's visitation time), as had Raúl (the elder) who likewise had a falling out with him. Among other things already noted, *Che* was an arrogant bridge burner!

The worst kinds of relationships might be those that spread infectious diseases. "My body aches everywhere," said Moroni on May 14, 2020, "and I have diarrhea, too." He was one of the few sick *machucados* living in the 118A *módulo*. Listening, John grabbed his mask out of his backpack. Every day he would come into the dining room where the long-term drug dealer was greeted with a kiss on both cheeks by Manuel and Karim. He had an unsightly gauze patch set on his left arm, which one could see daily as he crossed the patio wearing just a towel and heading for his daily cold shower. He was the only *reo* to routinely leave the 118/118A complex since he had to undergo dialysis every other day in Villa Alemana. Who knows for sure why the older man had a fever, but in the prison's infirmary, they determined his symptoms to indicate that he had Covid-19 (Coronavirus) with symptoms. This caused the *pacos* to take him down to the Van Buren public hospital in Valparaiso for testing.

The next morning 118A was put into quarantine wherein the *machucados* were locked in their cells 24 hours a day largely without working electricity and certainly without showers. If Moroni's test came back positive, the likelihood was high that all of 118's *reos* were infected, and the entire *módulo* would be placed into quarantine. "It's really a bummer," shouted Mauricio. John and Carlos (who now lived in the cell) hardly liked the idea of being locked in their cell, with the size and smells of a large bathroom. They had nothing else to do but to await the test results. Moroni likely would not survive the sickness, and Miami (age 64 with diabetes), Rubén (age 59 with diabetes, overweight, and hypertension), Delfín (age 83 with various illnesses, mainly respiratory), and John (age 57 with hypertension, insulin resistance, diverticulitis, and hypothyroidism) were at the greatest risk should the Coronavirus disease affect them. John, Waldo, Miami, and Ismael, wore their masks most of the day. The others, mostly younger (under age 45) did not bother. *Che* put on his while he was bringing food to *reos* in 118A. The rest figured there was no point after such exposure.

Other aspects of shared cell life also left something to be desired. John was concerned about the

limited space over his head and the bunk bed, with Mauricio and Carlos lying above him. Most of his days were spent in this position, lying down while he was reading or doing other things at night. However, the spacers which had been used to increase the headroom in John's bunk and Mauricio's were removed so that Carlos could have more space above. Upon seeing the *suboficial mayor* John said, "when you moved me to this room, you said I could increase the bunk space by nine centimeters, not reduce it by ten." He replied, "I decided that each bunk's space should be equal." John only saw the arbitrary and capricious decree as bringing more suffering. Carlos, who had little space before, now had more than the other men. Thus, May 13, 2020, turned out to be a bad day.

Yet, John's health improved a little. "No diarrhea," John smirked. His wife had found him a mini thermos made of metal that, while not allowed, was smuggled in via a nurse known to Mauricio. Heretofore, John had only boiled water in the electric kettle to heat his bathwater, now he also filled the little thermos and used the hot water to wash a potato or some chunks of meat that came in *rancho*. It worked to disinfect the food!

John's chess fame was by now widely known, both by 118's *reos* and those passing through. By May 10, 2020, John's chess record stood at 850-54-12. No one but Rubén and Ismael would play with him, other than an occasional prisoner *en transito* or those who were being released the next day and spent their last night in 118A. Some of those visitors were very good and posed John's greatest threat. The Coronavirus pandemic had delayed court hearings for many accused in 118. The delay made no difference for men like Carlos or Raúl (the elder) who knew they would be in jail for many years. Carlos was retired Navy and would get credit for time waiting for trial against his eventual sentence for child rape. Now for John, Diego, Waldo, Karim, and José, the situation was different, since, with good lawyering, they could be placed into home arrest instead, signing in monthly or weekly with the *gendarmes*.

John, facing 17½ years, was understandably nervous—especially because his lawyer situation was still unclear as the preparation for trial hearing approached (May 19, 2020), and a full trial would be scheduled around the first week of July. Contrary to his personal libertarian philosophy, he was going to go the cheap route and use the public defender who appeared or seemed to be putting in extra effort into his case and reduction in sentence.

The best way to keep one's mind off his circumstances was through smartphone browsing, chatting, and calling. Nevertheless, the Internet signal was simply terrible in some cells. Although John, Ismael, Karim, and others could have some success with later-model phones, downloading both videos and files, doing video conferencing was very difficult, if not impossible, at least from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. Those on the other side of the building's staircase did much better. John had invited Ismael to participate in the online Zoom group for Historic Baptists, where John also taught, but doing so was also difficult. It was easier to use the phone access number provided by Zoom to do audio-only participation.

The climate could also make a difference in the quality of cell life. The cold air of late fall (May 21, 2020) affected the lower bunk (where John spent most of his prison life) more than those dwelling above him. A piece of wood was used to block air from entering the four-inch opening below the door, which also served to keep rats and mice out, but even then, John had to open his third and final quilt package in order to keep warm at night. The long-tailed mouse (the kind that

carries the dreaded Hantavirus) had gotten in that way too. John had seen it out of the corner of his eye over a couple of days, scurrying about. Indeed, the last sighting prompted a full-scale war. Mauricio and John, armed with a broom and Clorox, went after it and trapped it, making it squeal. But somehow, it got away under some furniture. Mousetraps and poison (which can be used to commit suicide) are not allowed in jail. So caveman tactics were required. The next day it was gone.

Afterward, conversation in the cell then turned from the mundane to the political, with Mauricio showing his centrism and Carlos and John their rightism or libertarianism. Carlos also took the opportunity to confess to being a homosexual—despite being married and having sexually molested his little eight-year-old daughter.

Out on the *patio*, tensions and disagreements could lead to fights and slay relationships. “Open the door,” ordered Maroni, after John, and closed it a second time (on May 17, 2020) due to the cold. Remembering Romans 12:18 and his biblical duty to avoid conflicts and make peace, John decided to defer to the sickly 53-year-old dialysis patient. “Just move to the other side of the dining hall,” interjected Karim. John did so, but Maroni pulled out his twoedged knife and threatened John anyway. As John moved his chair and things, Moroni rushed over to escalate the conflict, shoving the table into John. But he calmly replied, “I am going to take my chair and things and move outside,” and promptly did so. Moroni threw John’s wooden chess set out behind him. *Cabo* Castro listening as John reported the incident, only displayed a little smile and smirked given that John was twice the size of Moroni.

The next day, John asked the *suboficial mayor* if he could defend himself if someone from the *módulo* attacked him with a knife. “I know you said that those who fight will be expelled from 118.” The *gendarme* answered that expulsion would not be the result if he defended himself from an attack. John then readied a 1-inch x 3-inch piece of pine that same day. González said he would speak to Moroni, who had also threatened the Argentine with a knife some weeks earlier, as well as alert the jail’s classification section so that they could be ready to move Moroni out of 118.

It was nice to see some relationships come to an end. Every once in a while, *machucados* from other *módulos* to be set at liberty spent their last night in jail in the *en tránsito* quarters that shared the *patio* with 118. Normally, this intrusion resulted in friendly and interaction and some chess matches. But on May 23, 2020, a chubby young man confronted John for having shot at the “peaceful” protesters in Reñaca. Obviously endowed with Marxist ideology, he challenged John about the injustice that Chileans face within and outside of prison, about how unjust John’s supposed self-defense was, and how people would quickly stab John to death in other *módulos*. “Why?” asked John, “did they attack my property if I did not cause the alleged Injustice, and how would it be just to execute or decree the death penalty for a man who killed no one and only modestly injured one man, Ahumada, by his bullet’s ricochet? Is either thing just?” The *reo* snarled that John was mistaken as he was walking away. It was best to let that short relationship die.

Chapter IX

Let Him Who Stole Steal No Longer

Right-wing radical and thief Diego was abruptly set at liberty—to the surprise cheers of the other *reos* in 118—moving to home arrest on May 20, 2020. The young *excarabinero* (ex-cop) was delighted. He only stole while high on pills, and Chilean legislation goes easy on such crimes.

Gendarmes stealing from *reos* was another story.” Persecution: “That was the word Ismael, Carlos, and Rubén used to describe what *paco* Cabo Castro had been doing to John for seven months. Castro was young, perhaps 30, skinny with a pencil neck, and a featherweight; not much more than one-half of John’s weight. He was also an abuser of power, significantly stupid, not to mention ignorant, strutting around with a cocky, arrogant attitude. Breaking with the great majority of *gendarmes* who liked and approved of John and his public stand against his hard-leftist attackers, using his pistol, Castro announced in the dining hall early on that he was a communist. He added that he lived in Concon near John’s home in Reñaca and that once John was free, he would come around to take him on someday and do him bodily harm.

Every week when Castro came to fill-in for *suboficial mayor* González during his days off, with whom John enjoyed a very cordial and friendly relationship, John would be required to acknowledge his submission to Castro and suck up to any number of biting, nasty comments that suggested he was rebellious, ungrateful, unappreciative, inattentive to his cleaning duties, or asking for something that he did not deserve, like conjugal visits (which, in fact, he did “deserve” as a “right” not a privilege—one example of Castro’s ignorance). Castro’s persecution seemed to be politically motivated but also revealed envy and resentment for John’s superior qualities and achievements that he could never hope to attain.

Castro had no love for *gringos* either. As noted earlier, when John reported to Castro that Moroni had threatened him with a knife, he just smiled, saying nothing. He would have been happy to see John stabbed. He could care less about John’s eye ailment or need to see the doctor and, like *paco* Cabo Busto, said, “Do you think you are better than anyone else just because you are a *gringo*?” John had hired the Argentine *Che* to clean his cell. He needed the money, and John was willing to help.

But Aníbal told Castro (and others like Bustos, famously stupid for shooting himself in his triceps while at home) that the voluntary accord represented enslavement or *someterse*. Thus, as punishment, Castro ordered John to clean the *patio* toilets and shower area, getting him out of his cell in his pajamas and flip flops to do so. He accused John (who was not required to do cleaning) of not doing his fair share. Such was the rough, nasty action of this scrawny jerk. Nonetheless, John just let all the abuse roll off him like water off a duck’s back (citing Romans 12:17-20 and Matthew 5:44-45 to himself)—at least until Castro stole his old cell phone on May 31, 2020, and then his new one on June 4, 2020. Together they only amounted to a few hundred dollars in value, but John had reached the end of his rope.

In the aftermath of the theft, Mauricio helped John draft an *escrito* wherein the lies and abuses of Castro were noted, along with his “persecution.” But before that, John had spoken to *suboficial mayor* González about the problem, who said “that *gendarme* management had informally approved cell phone use while visitation had been suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Hence, their use was not sanctioned, and no penalties were applied.” Nearly every inmate in 118 had one, and the *suboficial mayor* knew it. Even when they were sanctioned. He said, “I have never entered inmates’ cells to take them. I did not sell them to the inmates either. But if I saw an inmate with one, I just gave him a warning and asked him to be more discreet.”

While visitation was suspended, Karim, and occasionally Rubén, Manuel, and Ismael, even brought their phones down to the *patio* to do text messaging, watch Netflix, or power Rubén’s smart TV in the haircutting room (where the post-Moroni knife incident had created a factional gathering place for John, Rubén, Ismael, and Carlos, all of whom played chess, participated in evangelical services on Wednesday and Sunday, and often watched movies after their breakfast together in that small place). None of their phones were taken, except for Manuel’s, who got his back (from a different *paco*) right away.

Not so with John. In the first incident, Castro opened John’s cell door at 8:30 a.m. and announced that John had to get on a video conference call with his lawyer immediately, and thus had to leave everything in his cell. “May I at least take down the trash and dump it along the way?” The answer was, “No.” To prevent it from being stolen, John had put his old cell phone in his jacket pocket to take to the *patio*. Upon hearing the ultimatum and not wanting to lose it when he was searched by the other *gendarmes* in charge of the videoconferencing, and at that point still uncertain whether cell phones were allowed everywhere else in prison, and in light of the knife event, forced cleaning of the *patio* bathroom, etc., John wished to be cautious. So he quickly hid the phone amongst Mauricio’s shoes. Castro saw him do so and obviously stole the phone as soon as John left. A few hours later, John asked permission to go to his cell to get his backpack with utensils and bowl, etc. Castro snarled his permission. John then discovered that his cell phone was stolen. Raúl (younger) was bleaching the stairs, but no one else besides Castro was inside. The videoconference never took place. It was a lie used to get John’s phone, whose wife confirmed with the attorney that no such call had been scheduled.

The second incident occurred while John was locked in his cell and lying on his back. Mauricio always returned an hour or two later than John, after finishing his cleaning duties at the infirmary. Unfortunately, he had requested to return earlier than usual due to being physically and emotionally drained after a slew of stabbing victims had been treated, and Castro was still on duty in 118. He demanded that Mauricio and a few other *mozos* open their backpacks to be searched—something rarely done. Because of the previous theft, Mauricio had always asked compliant John to let him take his new cell phone with him and hide it in the infirmary. Castro probably knew that Mauricio had it since Aníbal, Ricardo, Sergio, Raúl (the younger), or another inmate, tight with the *pacos*, likely told him that it existed. Yet since he did not find the new phone in their cell, Castro must have deduced that Mauricio likely had it in the infirmary with him. Indeed, Ricardo, who at that time lived with Sergio and Carlos and worked in the infirmary, too, had let slip the day before that he had heard that only John’s old phone had been stolen; the new one was still out there. Thus, Castro had arranged the circumstances such that he was able to get it. He stopped Mauricio on the staircase outside of John’s and his cell, where there was (conveniently and intentionally) no camera surveillance. “Who’s phone is this?” asked Castro.

Mauricio was scared, at first lying and saying it was his, but he did not know the screen unlock code, indicating that it was not his. He only had three or four months to go prior to being placed on probation and did not want to jeopardize that benefit. He was also insecure about the

suboficial mayor's informal policies (and management's) about allowing cell phones. So Mauricio ran into the cell and asked John for his screen-lock password in order to save his bacon, telling Castro that the phone was not his after all but rather the *gringo*'s. Not wanting to harm his cellmate, John complied, which was also a mistake given that the phone was not disallowed, and Castro was just lying again when he threatened the sanction. Mauricio thought that he would just give it back, but he did not. Not only did he just take it, or rather stole it (being a nice phone), he did not turn it into the office of information services for review, nor did he register the phone by issuing a written infraction. He simply delighted in the booty and the opportunity to screw John over, as he frequently loved to do.

John and Mauricio mused over the loss that night. The next day, Rubén and Ismael counseled John to talk to the *suboficial mayor* since he had told them that phones were allowed. John did so, with considerable humility. "Señor González, you know that I never look for trouble with anyone here and that I am the most easy-going inmate in 118. You said that we could use cell phones while visitation was suspended, and so I got one, which was not very good (a Samsung J2 with a shattered screen), and then I acquired a better one (a Huawei P10), but before I could sell the first, Cabo Castro stole both of them." When he reported the incident to González, he was reminded of 118's informal procedure. "I told you to always come to me with any problems," replied González, "and the management's informal policy is precisely what you described; let me look into this." He found Castro the next day, who denied that either event had ever happened. John had also cited details of the "persecution" he faced from Castro and Moroni.

Later that afternoon, he asked for and received more details from John (while standing at the door, locking him in his cell), noting that he thought Castro had stolen them since the phones were not in the information office. Castro was also rumored (by Mauricio) to be a drug dealer, and after having received complaints about Castro from Rubén and a few others, one being a well-respected *mozo*, González wanted Castro booted out of the 118 *gendarme* rotation. Sycophants Sergio, Aníbal, and Raúl (younger) had all witnessed John's (unusual) private conversation with González. The only other such serious inquiry that John had even made in seven months had been regarding the Moroni knife incident. So all eyes were on him, and González later filled them in.

Before long, the incident was the main topic of conversation in 118, and most people suspected that Mauricio (who was hated by Sergio and the other sycophants) was in cahoots with Castro. Mauricio, in turn, said that Castro likely left the phones with Aníbal or Sergio to sell, given that they were buddies. John never doubted Mauricio, who had arranged the phone purchase, to begin with, and stood to lose a lot of benefits that John brought (i.e., food, supplies, gadgets, books, etc.) by stealing it from him. Castro was the clear culprit. Whether the sycophants were involved was another matter. But Mauricio's delay in talking to González about the incident made people doubt him even more, so he agreed to do so on June 10, 2020, so long as his upcoming probation was not jeopardized. In the meantime, John started to hint about issuing the *escrito* about Castro's persecution, asking his lawyer to contact the human rights group and likewise to secure an order of protection against Castro, plus a court order prohibiting the *gendarmes* from retaliating by sending him to 107.

All the stir caused considerable consternation among the *pacos*. González was set to retire in two weeks, and Miami worried that John could be booted out of 118 for complaining. Sergio and

Mauricio both agreed that the *pacos* would stick together. But “pastor” and “professor” John was both a believable plaintiff and the protagonist in a high-profile court case, due to go to trial in just seven weeks. Since he was likely never to return to 118 afterward, “What do I have to lose?” thought John. However, the academic side of him thought it probably best to simply let the whole thing slide. It was not that much money, certainly not worth the risk, and his son and others had already said they could buy John another phone.

Yet, apart from justice itself, John could benefit 118’s inmates by getting Castro booted by embarrassing the *gendarme* management publicly and, more importantly, getting a new phone would take time, and John needed to be able to communicate with lawyers, witnesses, and family. So John let the tension level remain high while, in accord with Mauricio, letting *suboficial mayor* González (who had considerable clout as a chief petty officer with nearly 30 years experience) further investigate the matter. John thought, “Maybe the phones will simply reappear under my pillow one day while I am down on the *patio*.” They did not, as of June 10, 2020, and González went home early. In the morning, he had asked John if he had seen Castro and asked for the phone directly, to which John replied, “I have not seen him.”

During the day, Mauricio saw the *suboficial mayor* but was too scared of losing his benefit of parole and so said nothing. Instead, he worked out a deal for John to use his phone up through his trial. The *pacos* were also threatening to move John to a maximum-security cell in 107 if he formally complained about Castro. His lawyer told his wife not to pursue the complaint since the cost or risk was too great. Maybe after the trial or right, before it ended, he could submit the complaint. Thus, by sticking together and threatening prisoners, injustice prevailed once again in prison. Still, John would also wait to see if González might get the phones back. But doing so seemed more and more unlikely.

Prison life was slowly robbing John of his health, too. John’s bed was so uncomfortable that the ice-cold walls touching his feet or arms would wake him up at night. His side hurt from lying on the rack in one position too long. It was annoying and also impossible to stretch out his arms, making them painful to move all day—especially his left shoulder.

The colder climate did not help matters. Late fall brought colder mornings in prison. John did not have a winter jacket and was beginning to suffer a bit for it. He had paid 20,000 pesos to contact Mauricio a few months earlier, but the paramedic friend could not find many stores open during the Covid-19 pandemic, nor could he find John’s size (XXL). Finally, Mauricio refunded John’s money and found another paramedic who brought in John’s own dark green jacket from home. That color of the jacket was not permitted to be bought in during normal visitation.

More than two months had passed without a visitation, and the *encomienda* (package delivery) service was the main way that food and other goods got into the prison. Some of the younger *pacos* were getting more sadistic and meaner, especially when they saw how much John’s wife was leaving for him. She left enough for John and Mauricio to eat dinner and snacks for a week so that John could avoid diarrhea and get some vegetables to eat. But some of the newer *pacos* thought there should be no more than a day or two’s worth of food—an arbitrary decision made to make the prisoner suffer more. John’s wife was good, however, at convincing them to let the food through. John was relieved for the time being.

But things were about to get worse for Pamela. On June 12, 2020, quarantine began in Valparaíso and Viña del Mar due to Coronavirus. Now all the people bringing *encomienda* had to request a permit (three-hour duration) in order to bring bags to the inmates. Plus, shopping the day before became a greater problem, with long lines to enter grocery stores, and still required permission. This public policy significantly affected the well-being of inmates who were now subject to a greater risk of increased suffering. Money could also be left with the *gendarme* window, up to 40,000 pesos per week, so inmates could buy snacks, drinks, and sandwich fixings, albeit hardly great to live on. The permits were applied for online via cell phone and, when stopped by law enforcement, the *carabinero* (policeman) or sailor would request to see it on the phone's screen.

Without visitation, the *machucados* got restless and began to use their cell phones illicitly. John recalled how Mauricio had once retorted, "The real reason for disallowing cell phones is so that no one can record the drug deals done with the *gendarmes*." However, John learned later that some *machucados* also run kiddie porn sites where they use stock pictures and videos of kids in sexy garb or even involved in sex acts and thus get people to deposit into their bank account to avoid prosecution for showing their erect penises to minors. The money earned financed a lot of drug, food, and cell phone purchases from the *gendarmes*, which fostered continuous theft and recycling of cell phones.

Chapter X

A Time to Mourn

Stricken with Covid-19 and pneumonia: John's move to *módulo* 109 and back.

John showed symptoms of Covid-19 on June 19, 2020, and this chapter provides the tedious yet titillating details of what unfolded afterward. On June 20, 2020, Carlos and Ismael saw John's thermometer reading move up, from 37.5°C to 38.3°C (99.5°F to 100.9°F), then drop quite a bit while sitting in the barber room. John mistakenly thought, "Apparently, the hand of God has been on me to quickly remove me and protect me. Clearly, I had symptoms and fever, but now they are gone." John knew when he was sick. Unfortunately, at midnight the fever was back, and John began striking the door with a makeshift barbell. The night duty *gendarme* heard the ruckus after twenty minutes of pounding and took him to the infirmary, but the paramedics detected no fever. He mentioned that he had been taking paracetamol, and they said that doing so would have reduced the fever, and therefore, he needed to return in the morning without taking any more.

He did so, accompanied by González, but once again, there was no sign of fever, even though John's thermometer showed there was. He asked them to recheck, and they showed their electronic thermometer's screen that said "lo," which they said meant his temperature was *low*. The next afternoon, others could see his pale face and thermometer reading well above 38°C. But during the morning, his temperature, taken by his tried-and-true mercury thermometer, had been normal. John found no scientific explanation for what happened. He searched the Internet and found no flu or Covid-19 infection lasting only 12 to 20 hours, especially flu unrelated to vomiting or stomach pain. And with the penal hospital thermometers not working or malfunctioning (showing his temperature lower than it really was, 35.9°C at the infirmary and 38.1°C in John's cell immediately afterward), John said, "I could only think that God's Providence protected me from having to change *módulos* by not showing them my actual temperature."

But that wishful thinking ended up being short-lived, as he would soon be forced to migrate to a quarantine *módulo*. While being healthy a few hours later (according to John's thermometer) seemed miraculous, he had to wonder, "If I go to the prison hospital now, will the workers show me 34.5°C on the screen again, or will it be less?" What had transpired was very strange, indeed. John would indeed thank God that he was better by mid-July, with only a little cough, but his immediate situation was worsening. His premature thanksgiving on June 20th and 21st was mistaken. He had Coronavirus. The details of what transpired with the disease are as follows.

On the evening of June 21, 2020, John had reported to the doctor on call, "I took my temperature today (38.2°C or 100.6°F) while I was out on the *patio*. I had a little cough, some sore throat discomfort, and mildly sore muscles." He reported that he currently had a temperature of 37.4°C or 99.3°F. His body was fighting against something, but he only had vitamins to take. John had been sick and basically without appetite since June 19th, having been examined by prison "Doctor" David Silva for his abdominal and kidney area pain on the 20th. As noted above, John had used a makeshift curls barbell to bang on the door loudly at midnight to get the night guard to take him to the infirmary. Appendicitis was ruled out, but the signs of Coronavirus plus a kidney stone were there. "Come back for a check-up in the morning of the 22nd after the fever-

reducing effects of paracetamol have worn off, and do not take any more of it.”

John’s temperature ranged from 37.5°C to 38.3°C (99.5°F to 100.9°F) during the day, according to his mercury “prism” thermometer that he had smuggled in, and that night was no different. John had gone to the infirmary on the 20th with *suboficial mayor* González, and the nurse used the electronic forehead thermometer and found his temperature to be 35.9°C (96.7°F). She rejected the mercury thermometer reading since that type of thermometer had been removed from the market by the government for being “dangerous.” Did that make any sense? “But it has measured body temperature correctly for 100 years!” John complained. He figured there was a conspiracy to make him not look sick. González shrugged off the idea and back at 118, even upon seeing John’s thermometer continued to believe the ignorant nurse’s story. The paramedic present had used another electronic thermometer, which showed “lo” on the screen.” That has to do with the battery, not my temperature,” complained John. Nonetheless, the staff and González were convinced that he was not sick.

The next day, when John went to see paramedic “Doctor” Silva, he brought his thermometer with him, and Silva took its reading, showing John had a serious fever. He asked John to return in the morning. Eventually, he would be diagnosed with suffering from Covid-19, pneumonia, and kidney stones simultaneously. Initially, John decided it best to keep the illness a secret, lest he be carried away to quarantine. Therefore, he said nothing to *suboficial mayor* González beyond “I’m fine with normal temperature” when he opened the cell door in the morning, further stating, “Happy Father’s Day!” Nonetheless, what transpired afterward was anything but happy.

They had taken John to the prison hospital at 00:30 on the 22nd (different *gendarmes*). Those in *módulo* 118 were concerned, not only for John but also for themselves, who were probably infected, too. “Doctor” David Silva wanted to check John in the morning. If he were infected, they would place him in *módulo* 109, in a cell without running water most of the day and only a nasty hole as a bathing drain or toilet. He injected John with something that sounded like “epidermal.” As noted earlier, the professional told him that he could not take more paracetamol because it hid his true temperature. John showed him his paracetamol-influenced 37.6°C thermometer reading, and he was concerned. He examined his abdomen and legs and ruled out appendicitis but did not rule out Covid-19. John further told him what medical problems he had and that he was Mauricio’s cellmate. He told him about the rise and fall of temperature, dry vomiting, plus other minor symptoms. He begged him not to change his *módulo* and to just lock him up alone for two weeks in 118.

As the following section details, 109 was horrible: chock full of rats and bugs and overall unsanitary conditions. But John could not sleep with that pain. Also, he did not want to infect others, even though it was probably too late. He wanted to be taken to a private clinic. He had a good *Isapre* (private medical insurance). Thus, he hoped that the Supreme Court would intervene the next day, but it did not. Silva also asked John if he had kidney stones beforehand. “Yes, once,” he replied, “in 2004.” While kidney stones were hardly a pleasant prospect, the truth is that John had no pain when urinating. Yet another troublesome situation was about to befall him.

Later that morning, still on the 22nd, John walked down the stairs and found Castro and said: “Dr. Silva asked me to go for a check-up this morning, concerned about my possible Covid-19 infection.” Castro asked for the appointment slip, which John was not given. “You may not go

then; get out into the yard,” snorted the idiotic guard. John began to boil about this fact. Not only was he sick and needed to go to see the doctor, now because of Castro’s stupidity, but he was also likely now infecting others with Covid-19. The alternative to going to the doctor was confining John to his cell alone, not putting him with others. When the penal infirmary’s nurse arrived covered from head to toe to prevent being infected, obviously concerned after John did not show up for his check-up, Castro then called John in.

Upon seeing the nurse in her suit, and before several others, John looked Castro in the face and said, “You are an imbecile.” John had taken his temperature in the yard, showing Carlos and Ismael the result, and it was rising just as in previous days. Castro was obviously miffed, and the nurse left. Instead of taking John to the infirmary, the enraged “chimp” walked with John past the officers’ offices and complained about John being disrespectful. Then he put John, increasingly sick and with a rising fever, into the open-air holding cage nearby for nearly four hours (on a rainy, early winter day) with no water or toilet. The abuse of power and lack of respect for human rights was impressive.

Then Castro brought John before a lieutenant *gendarme* who asked John about his disrespectful statement. John repeated it and added, “Castro has subnormal intelligence similar to a chimpanzee for throwing a likely Covid19 positive man into the *patio* to infect others. He was a coward who probably gloried in hitting women, too, just as he chooses to assail or harass sick people.” The lieutenant said that Castro did not see a slip from the doctor and thus had no obligation to take John to the doctor. “Is it my fault that he did not give me a piece of paper?” John retorted.

John then went on to tell nearly all about Castro’s bad behavior, including cell phone theft. The lieutenant said that cell phones were not permitted, to which John replied, “*Suboficial mayor* González authorized their use during the period when there is no visitation.” He also said that he had great respect for all uniformed men, including *gendarmes*, with whom he had a good relationship with all but Castro, whom, he said, was a shame for all others who wore a uniform. The lieutenant had no further questions and did not want to hear any more. John said, “I will put a written complaint for persecution against Castro,” and was willing to do so immediately. The lieutenant said he had to do so from the *módulo* and with its director’s stamp. Then Castro took him back to his cell.

While shut in his cell, John started writing the complaint, but Castro appeared again 30 minutes later and opened the door. “Your cellmate Mauricio tested positive for Covid-19, and you are being transferred to *módulo* 109 for quarantine. Let’s go. Get your mattress and personal things quickly.” John was quite sick by this point and could not move quickly. He tried to think of all he would need. Castro said he was not allowed to bring his quilts, even though it was wintertime. John being feverish and blanketless, seemed to delight the sadistic guard.

John’s ailment made breathing so hard that he had to stop every 50 meters or so along the route to 109 in order to catch his breath. Aníbal and Sergio were kind enough to help him carry things after they saw him struggling so much. The forced march was at least a kilometer, and when they arrived at 109, no *gendarme* was there. Castro went looking for someone who was in charge. The two helpers left, and John waited for a half-hour. Finally, Castro came back and called out to John to head back. John thought he meant to go to 108 next door. Such was not the case. John

had to carry all his stuff back, alone, to the cage (located mid-route) in the rain where he was earlier, where a couple more *reos* joined him and waited with him for an hour or so. Finally, the night shift *gendarmes* came and took the prisoners to 109. Upon arriving at his cell, John could not believe his eyes.

The cell featured grime on the floor, a window that would not close with cold air pouring in, and a variety of bugs crawling all over the walls, floor, and ceiling. There was no shower stall, and the toilet was a hole carved into a 1-meter \times 1-meter \times ½ meter high block of concrete with a tiny sink above it. Water ran only two to five hours a day, and when it first came on, around 9 a.m., the air in the pipes would forcefully spew out of the hole the excrement accumulated since last time water flowed to it. There were no lights, just two pairs of stripped wires protruding above and below the window. The place was primitive, cold, damp, and filthy, unfit for human use. It was like a camping nightmare that never ended. John would spend the next twenty-seven days in this hellhole, about the worst environment possible to recover from a severe illness.

John made his bed and tied the food bag his wife sent on one of the three lines installed by prior inhabitants to keep the bugs out. Later that night, he asked the nice night-duty *gendarme* to take him to the infirmary. After his checkup, he was granted permission to return to his cell in 118 and get his quilts, more of his prescription medicine, light, bucket, water and drinks, and a few other items, including Mauricio's cell phone (secretly). At least he (and some lucky bugs) would now be warm in his new bed. After several weeks, John was thankful that he had less than twenty bites (usually leaving scars) on his legs and hands from his unwelcome, blood-sucking companions.

There were a couple of other striking differences between 118 and 109 besides facilities, class of people, habitability, and cleanliness. One was the noise from people banging on cell doors and other things, screaming at the *pacos* to flip the circuit breaker or setting a date for *patio* fights along with proposed killings. These were commonplace, daily for several hours in 109. One could hardly hear himself think during those times. 118 rarely had any banging unless someone was really sick or the power got cut. Few people in 109 advised the others that they were using the upper or lower circuit, leading to the breaker being tripped often. Not so in 118.

The other difference was the laundry service. In 109, laundry was handled by a gray-haired Argentine named *Che*, who ran three electric washing machines and three dryers out of a small room. He worked for tips and said that he would not do underwear since doing so would make him look subservient in the eyes of others. In 118, Miami and *Che* washed the clothes of other men for 2,000 pesos (USD 2.75) per bucket full, underwear included, and hung clothes to dry on lines.

John grew increasingly sicker. His fever at night soared, but someone stole his thermometer, so he could not know the exact reading. Judging from his relative chill at night, even when wearing three pairs of pants or sweats and a shirt, sweater, and hooded winter jacket (which he, for the most part, stayed in for three weeks), he figured he was well above 39.0°C (102.2°F).

Doctor Venegas, a rather courteous and kind lady, examined John for the first time on the 23rd (and then every 5 or 6 days afterward). She listened to the level of phlegm in his lungs and cough and diagnosed him with pneumonia, for which she gave him seven days of strong antibiotics,

later boosted to thirteen days. She also surmised that his intestinal pain in the kidney to testicle areas was probably a kidney stone. He was given pain medication and two pills designed to reduce fever.

All of it also reduced his appetite. Even the thought of food was revolting, and after three weeks of eating fewer than 500 calories per day, he had dropped two belt notches and perhaps ten to fifteen kilograms. (Once back in 118, he found that his muscle mass had been eroding. He could only do half the bench press repetitions that he could do just prior to entering 109.)

Three nights during the end of June (between doctor visits), John thought he was close to death. He could not breathe well and sometimes not at all, waking him up as his brain struggled to get oxygen to his lungs. It was horrifying lying all alone in the cold, dark cell with death knocking at the door. He took the Covid-19 test but did not know he was positive for six days, but Coronavirus wreaked its toll in the meantime. Hence, the three new ailments, in addition to his hypertension, insulin resistance, diverticulitis, hypothyroidism, hormone deficiencies, and macular degeneration (all being controlled or treated by medication), made John by far the sickest of the sixty or so inmates quarantined in 109.

Only twice during his nearly month-long stay in 109 did he eat a prepared prison meal. And other *reos* were as repelled by him as was by food. No one wanted to bunk with John. They literally avoided him like the plague, especially Mauricio, Ricardo, and Helmut. The *gendarme* would sometimes enter and comment or exclaim just how bad off John looked.

It was serious, and John knew that when he had to consciously tell his brain to make his lungs breathe (since it was not happening automatically, sometimes for over an hour) that he was in bad shape. He had a hard cough, scratchy throat, diarrhea, occasional vomiting, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, and almost no energy to do anything. Getting up to turn on the light was a chore (imagine how much more so walking down four flights of stairs and back up when the doctor came!). His wife had sneaked a new thermometer in the cardboard base of the food bag that arrived five days after John got to 109. Thus he now had to get up to turn on the light that Helmut rigged up in order to read the thermometer. Killing bugs was a burden, too. Life was hard.

Given the filthy, inhumane environment he had been thrust into, it was almost a miracle he survived. Indeed, John took it as a sign of God being with him and still having some purpose to fulfill in life. After two or three weeks, he started gaining the upper hand on his illnesses. John had Mauricio's cell phone for most of the first couple of weeks. The signal was so bad that most of the time, he could not make a phone call, and WhatsApp messages would take anywhere from ten minutes to five hours to send. But he was grateful to be able to communicate with his wife, children, friends, and other Christians. They were all understandably quite worried about him and the dangerous environment he was in. However, Mauricio wanted his phone back, so he did not have to keep borrowing Helmut's (who was his 109 cellmate along with Ricardo). John complied.

Then came blue-eyed Cristóbal, nicknamed *Rufo*, who claimed he was a *vivo* (i.e., a tough guy and leader of some small gang) who had been sent to quarantine in 109 from ill-reputed, general population *módulo* 105. John had been walking slowly down the hall on the third floor,

observing all the men using their cell phones (reception was much better in the hall than in the cells).“Can you get me one of those?” he inquired of a couple of people. The answer was,” Yes, but it will take time.” But *Rufo* handed John his Samsung J6 and headset and said,“Here, take it; call your family, and then take it with you and use it all night.” He added that John could use it every afternoon and night while he was in 109. John immediately thought there must be some cost or strings attached.“Why would *Rufo* deprive himself of his phone and let me use it for free?” But no cost was specified. *Rufo* only talked about his *gringo* appearance and especially greenish eye color that was similar to John’s.

John used the cell phone to call and message friends and family for hours, and it worked much better than Mauricio’s. So he was happy. However, the next day, as soon as the *gendarme* opened the cell door, Cristóbal was in John’s cell and took the phone for a while. He then started moving in without asking John or obtaining the *paco*’s permission. Mauricio chided John and recommended that he speak to the *gendarme* and block the move.“He just looks at you as being an ATM.” John had already figured out that there would be some financial cost, but he also thought that it would be best to have someone with him in case of an emergency (to call the *gendarmes*) and to help clean and improve the nasty place. Cristóbal was already cleaning the walls, toilet, and floors, which John still had no energy to do anything and had only done the bare minimum of cleaning since arriving two weeks earlier. He even made John’s bed that day (as well as on all subsequent days). So John decided it was best to let him stay.

Rufo claimed that he was a *vivo*, but John found out later (from Manuel’s investigation) that he was only a *huevo* acting like one. (It was easy to pull the wool over the *gringo*’s eyes.) In all modules that house convicted criminals, other than 118, there is an internal hierarchy among *machucados*. A *vivo* is a man who stands in his own right and is respected for his power over others, or perhaps because of his toughness, money, or relatively high intelligence, and often because he has never been beaten up by another *reo*. He is sort of the top dog in a cell or group of men occupying different cells and is expected to treat his underlings well by paying them or by giving them food or drugs.

He designates some tough guys, called *perros*, to handle his affairs in jail. Some specialize in fighting for the *vivo*, defending anyone in the gang, and even maiming or killing for the *vivo*. The lowest ranking men are called *perkins*, those weaker sorts who clean the cell, cook, do laundry, and perform other services, including running errands for the *vivo* or his *perros*. Men in this latter category are also called *huevones* or *longi*, which includes unclassified or unaligned men in the *módulo*, too, along with older men, who are called *papis*. *Vivos* are the only *machucados* who do not have to ask permission before entering other men’s cells. If a *perkins* tries to do so, it is considered disrespectful, and he might get beaten up. John was considered a *papi* while in 109. (Prisoners *en tránsito* from other *módulos* call John, Miami, Rubén, Delfín, and others over 55, *papi*, too.)

Men who are good thieves, especially tough-guy or armed robbers, are called *choros*, and those who steal from other *machucados* or cellmates are called *domésticos*. The former thieves are held in high regard while the latter are frowned upon. Outside prison, a *doméstico* would be termed a *mechero* (or maybe a *doméstico*), that is, a shoplifter, pickpocket, or petty thief. Note that an inmate can be both a *perkins* and a *doméstico*, or a *choro* and a *perro*, or any other combination of the two thief terms with *vivo*, *papi*, or *huevo*. In fact, many *vivos* are *choros*, too.

In Chilean prisons, there is a crime-level respectability hierarchy as well, with the toughest and most violent guys (usually serving longer sentences) being most respected, often becoming *vivos*. In the upper class, murderers of men and men who shoot policemen or other uniformed people receive the highest respect. Close behind them are armed robbers, *choros*, and men who assault others brutally, or who set off bombs, and perhaps those who are serious arsonists. Then come the upper-middle class, men who are big-time thieves (e.g., truck hijackers, safe-crackers, ATM machine thieves, jewelry store ring thieves, corporate fraudsters, etc.) and firearms rules violators. Many from this group will be *vivos*.

The middle class is comprised of scam-artists, conmen and those who commit fraud, vandals, tax cheats, forgers, swindlers, white-collar criminals, habitual drunk drivers, those guilty of involuntary manslaughter, men who kill others by accident while working or driving (drunk or otherwise), racketeers, smugglers, small-time assailants or brawlers, blackmailers, extortionists, and non-violent kidnappers.

The lower middle class includes drug traffickers who, even though often tough and violent, are looked down upon because they directly or indirectly sell to children and thus hurt innocent people. Yet, they still might end up being *vivos* if they have a lot of money or power over others. The lower class includes rapists, murderers of parents, and women (except perhaps crimes of passion, e.g., where a man catches his wife in bed with another man and kills both) and related sexual assault crimes.

Machucados have a lot of respect for women, not only because they are the weaker gender and deserve protection rather than abuse by men, but also because they are by far the most faithful visitors of *reos* in jail, bringing them what they need: faithful mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives or girlfriends. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that 80% of the people who visit prisoners are women.

The bottom of the barrel of this lowest class includes kiddie-porn producers, child abusers, or child rapists, especially serial child rapists. They are so hated that they must be put into special prison *módulos* lest they be badly beaten, cut, raped, or killed by other *machucados*. Easy-going 118 had many such criminals for precisely that reason. Although they were not harmed, many of the other inmates would privately express their visceral detestation for them.

Rufo could not read and write well, not having completed seventh grade. When he was 12, he left home with his older brother (14) and never returned. Life on the street was hard in Valparaíso, and he ate by stealing food and eating it at the targeted supermarket. He fell into other crimes, too, that landed him in juvenile detention. After he reached adulthood, he quickly found himself in prison, and now in 109, he was 32, with most of his life after age 12 having been spent behind bars. He claimed that he fought with other prisoners as well, showing John six scars from knives or spears mingled with his obnoxious tattoos.

Rufo talked incessantly, either to John (who was locked up with him on average 23 hours per day) or with one of his two girlfriends. He lied to both, claiming that each one was the only one he loved. The one he loved less, Jani, who mothered his now 5-year-old daughter, felt especially insecure, and the two fought a lot. (After John got back to 118, *Rufo* told John's wife that he was done with Jani.) John found the situation annoying. "I only have eyes for my wife," explained

John, "I do not want to see your girlfriends naked or any pornography, please." To his credit, Cristóbal complied with John's wishes and only a couple of times inadvertently momentarily shared a glimpse of his naked vice (which John ignored).

Rufo was naturally inconsiderate with his music, which he played loudly for hours, forcing John to listen to awful *regatón*. The same was true for talking out loud on the phone. He also feigned religious interest to endear himself to John more, although he occasionally attended Historic Baptists' online Zoom services after separating from John. He regularly acquired pot and smoked it at the doorway. He even coaxed John into lending him 5,000 pesos (USD 6) to buy a joint, but after that, John put his foot down. He and his wife survived from donations of rightists and Christians, most of whom would not approve of John lending cash to Cristóbal so he could get high. *Rufo* started stealing stuff the day he moved in, giving John's peach juice to his previous cellmates, who, in turn, came in and stole John's raspberry jam and mustard. Over the next two weeks, *Rufo* would swipe John's baseball cap, rubber shoes, pepper, toenail clippers, lots of newly purchased linens and blankets, food, and more. When John's wife tried to recover the newly purchased items, he got offended.

Rufo did nearly all the cleaning and bed-making, and he got John his own cell phone (albeit overpriced at USD150) after a week. No one messed with John; everyone knew he was under *Rufo*'s protection. John also now had someone to help him in case of an emergency. Nevertheless, none of these benefits came cheap. John spent more than double what he did in 118 for food from the kiosk and other food and supplies that his wife brought. Still, for the sake of safety, cleanliness, and communicating with friends and family, it was worth bearing the added cost for two weeks. Only once did John lend *Rufo* 5,000 pesos to buy pot. After that, John put his foot down and said, "*Rufo*, you can do what you want, but please do not ask me to participate in your getting high." All in all, John gave him 30,000 pesos (USD 37) in cash, shared all of the food his wife brought or that he bought from the kiosk (*Rufotaking* $\frac{2}{3}$), detergents, and tools for cooking. Cristóbal swapped John's good baseball cap and slippers for his own mediocre ones, without permission, on the day they moved back to their respective *módulos* (July 17th).

He also lied to John about certain privileged items, saying he had packed them in a bag when in reality, he had stolen John's toenail cutter, pepper, new phone charger, and headset, *micrón* heating element, among other things. Helmut carried John's bucket full of stuff downstairs when they left 109, which helped him considerably, as the 118 contingent headed back to their *módulo*.

Later, when Cabo Ortiz said the rest of the shipment was ready to come into the prison, John told him to bring it to him since he had paid for it all. Instead, *Rufo* showed up at 118, and John had to split it all. Ortiz was loyal to *Rufo*. With regard to the 57,000 pesos (USD 71) worth of sheets, towels, etc., that John's wife brought to Yani to enter for John, it simply disappeared. John did not hear from Cristóbal's girlfriend again, and he conveniently forgot about all the goods purchased.

John met with several Evangelicals while in 109. Three were from 103 and now in quarantine: Christian, Alexis, and Rodrigo; one from 105, Ramiro; and one from 111, Manuel. They met out on the *patio* daily, and one preached, one prayed, and another coordinated. John thought they were serious guys. However, Christian warned John that all is not what it appears to be. Sadly,

prison Evangelicals are largely known for their immorality. There is ambition, envy, interest in achieving power, station, or authority as a preacher, worship leader, coordinator, or prayer leader, a real disaster among Evangelicals. Nearly all of them were Arminian Pentecostals.

The worst practice involved using cell phones and Facebook accounts, along with sexy images of underage girls. Some earn as much as seventeen million pesos (USD 22,500) per month. Among the seventy alleged Evangelicals in *módulo* 103 (which is reserved for “brethren”), only ten do not blackmail photos of minors. The Evangelicals are hardly alone in practice, which is widespread throughout the prison, and fund drug, food, and cell phone purchases, which often allows the *gendarmes* to look the other way.

Basically, the extortionist posts on a pedophile site and attracts perverts to it, eventually getting them to chat with one of the underage “girls.” “When a voice message is required, the *reo*’s girlfriend facilitates it. Then the stockphoto, sexy pedophile images are sent. The user, at some point, reveals his full name, phone number, and address, sending a picture of himself. After some sexy chat, the man is wheedled into sending a photo of his erect penis to the “girl” (note: the men are usually in their 50s or 60s and are often professionals). The *reo* steps in and calls the man, acting as the “girl’s” dad and who is quite livid about what the pervert is doing with his “daughter.” To avoid legal complications, he demands a cash deposit into his bank account; otherwise, he will take the images and chat records to the authorities. The pervert gives in, in some cases paying several hundred thousand pesos (hundreds of dollars). That completes the scam.

Apparently, some professing Evangelicals deal drugs, too. The *módulo*’s floor administrator is involved, and if a believer reports someone, then he is thrown out of the fourth floor and moved down to be with the approximately 250 “Gentiles” who occupy the first three floors. As far as John was concerned, “They are all just wolves in sheep’s clothing who practice such extortion.” He directly confronted the men he met in 109, and all denied any involvement in either thing. John was somewhat relieved, albeit still in shock.

When John got back to 118, José had been released to home arrest, and *suboficial mayor* González had been replaced by *sargento segundo* Silva as head of the *módulo*, a man who did things by the book and took no bribes nor did he profit from food sales. Silva also made lots of changes, like tearing down the *bodega* (storage shed) walls to make the patio larger, moving people from one cell to another. In that effort, Ricardo was sent to live with John and Mauricio. It was once again cramped in the cell, but it all worked out OK. Many people wanted to know how John was, and Ismael, Rubén, and Karim listened to the tale of his sickness, *Rufo*, Evangelicals, and living conditions in 109 in detail. They were amazed.

Then the Huawei P10 cell phone for John arrived that Mauricio had helped him secure six weeks prior. This phone had a much larger screen than the Nokia and worked as well or better. So the Nokia was retired and would serve as a backup phone or be sold. Pentecostal evangelical Aaron (32) also arrived, having been accused of child molestation. He came to 118 after having been beaten in 111. He attends a church that is soft on sin. For example, members may live together and have sexual relations without being married. John also realized just how much his muscle mass had reduced due to being sick and losing weight. Before going to 109, he could bench press the bar and makeshift weights (no more than 100 pounds by John’s estimate) 28 or 29 times.

After returning to 118, he could only manage 15 times.

Editing his books was now much easier on his new phone, and a libertarian friend sent John a Netflix login that provided occasional entertainment. So John was doing much better. Of course, just about anything would have been better than 109. His wife's food bags arrived without much incident. Ricardo started receiving bags, too, now and then, making food in the cell relatively abundant at first.

The infirmary boss started to curtail doing laundry for cellmates but did make an exception for John once, but since then, he employed Miami to wash clothes. John read a lot and the weight of his books accumulated. If John had to change cells or *módulos*, it was a lot to carry. So he sent books out during visitation or by a paramedic working in the infirmary, where new books were also brought in. The only books kept and read permanently were his Spanish and English Bibles and concordance.

He had, in fact, reread the entire Bible except for Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers by the time his trial was over. He read both *A History of the American People* and *Modern Times* (Spanish) by Paul Johnson, *Out of the Ashes* by James Whelan (Chilean history), *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Spanish) by Nancy Pearcey, *The Era of Reconstruction* by Kenneth Stamp, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* by Rodney Stark, *The Black Book of Communism*, multi-authored, which he had started years earlier but never finished, and *Death by Government* by R. J. Rummel. These were large works of history, political philosophy, criticism of Darwinism, and discussions about different Worldviews. Plus, he read a Christian devotional *Habits of Grace* (Spanish) by David Mathis, *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, and several older little books like *Schindler's List*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and Joseph Conrad's *The Duel*.

He read a few other novels, three fiction, *The Poisonwood Bible* (a tragic story of a Baptist missionary family in the Congo, arriving in 1959), *Soul Harvest* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (a fictional account of the aftermath of the dubious pre-tribulation rapture that John could hardly stand reading), *Desperation* by Stephen King, and one other, *Wild Swans*, the story of one family's horrors living under Mao Zedong's China. He had a need for other books frequently, and his wife would try to get them to him. Some later arrivals that John read included *En Defensa de los Más Necesitados*

(In Defense of the Neediest) by Argentine economists Alberto Benegas Lynch and Martin Krause, and *Migrations and Cultures: A World View*, by economic historian Thomas Sowell.

John also got caught up with gossip about other *machucados*, like the prosecutor seeking a sentence of forty years for Raúl (the elder). With the *bodegas* being opened up, John's chairs for visitors stored there no longer had protection, and two were broken. Waldo asked to use a couple (since fewer chairs were available, too) and said he would be responsible for them, but after one broke, he decided not to honor his word. So John moved them into the new *bodega* taken from the *en tránsito* cells.

Along with these changes, John was surprised by Silva when he asked him to change cells and live with Karim and *Che*. John pleaded that he stay where he is, noting that he had lived with

Che before, and there were problems. *Che* also belted out his opposition. Silva said it had nothing to do with preference. But rather keeping all accused together and not having John with *mozos* who were convicted because the cell door was open in the morning for them to leave early, and it provided John a means to escape. John pleaded to be put in with Rubén and Ismael (moving Waldo from there and in with Karim and *Che*). Nevertheless, Silva said he would wait until the next day. That day did not come since Silva was only back one other day (wherein no action was taken the next day on July 29th or later on July 31st when Silva was back) since Silva was placed in quarantine after testing positive for Covid-19. So John was safe for two weeks or maybe a month.

Waldo went to home arrest on August 6th. His plea bargain agreement was nearly ready to sign wherein he would confess to a child abuse (physical, not sexual) charge that he was innocent of in order to guarantee no jail time. "It is just the nature of a bad and unjust system," Waldo remarked. John and others wished him well as he parted with many of his belongings on the *patio*. Waldo's departure also opened up a space where John could be moved into should Silva so desire upon his return. John stood to lose less from the move since the benefits of free laundry service, and refrigeration in the infirmary ended on August 7th. Mauricio had also lost his occasional kindness toward John.

Chapter XI

Like a Bad Tooth and a Foot out of Joint

On August 9th, things blew up in the cell. Mauricio asked, “Are you still buying stolen food, John?” He thought that the carrots, onions, garlic, and fruit John bought from a *mozo* in 118 were stolen goods and could be used against Mauricio’s upcoming parole try. Last week he told John to buy it just once a week. He conveniently forgot that and started accusing John. It was more of the same arbitrary and capricious rule-making behavior that Mauricio was famous for. Adding to this trouble, there was a problem with the paramedic courier (Panchito) bringing stuff in for John that day. Mauricio accused John, ridiculously, of telling people that Panchito was bringing in cell phones for people.

John wrote to Panchito: “Just so you know, I have never told anyone your identity, and I most certainly have never told anyone that you brought in a cell phone for someone. I appreciate your friendship and help. I just want you to be clear that I had no involvement whatsoever in what Mauricio mistakenly accuses me of.”

“ On the contrary, it was his accidental mistake that seems to have generated the problem for you, and I am sorry that it did. I do not lie as a rule (even Mauricio will confirm that fact), and I am not lying now. Moreover, I think I know how the rumor started. When Carlos was living with us in the cell before Ricardo came, Mauricio mentioned your name inadvertently when you were bringing something in. It was purely accidental, but Carlos learned your identity. That was not so bad except that later on, down on the *patio* when I talked with Ismael, Rubén, and Carlos, Sergio (Chuncoco) came over and talked about how money or food came in. I said nothing about who was helping me, but Carlos told Sergio that he heard it was someone named Panchito that Mauricio knew.”

“ From there, the problem grew since Cabo Castro stole my cell phone from Mauricio’s backpack when he searched him upon arrival to *módulo* 118 (coming back from the infirmary where he had hidden my phone to protect it from theft).”

“ Most everyone quickly knew that it had been taken from me, and they assumed that Mauricio had gotten it for me. Thus, Sergio and Aníbal presumed that you were bringing it from outside and began to spread a rumor. They asked me, and I told them that I did not know where he got the phone from, but that it was definitely not from Panchito. I had heard something from Mauricio about getting one from Diego after he was sent to home arrest. But I could not confirm it. I still do not know from whom he got the phone, and I do not want to know and have not asked. But I know for certain that you, Pancho, did not bring it in.”

Mauricio’s unfounded and misguided anger took John by surprise and sealed the deal that he would have to change cells. In six months, John only heard Mauricio admit he was wrong about something once. As a general rule, he was never wrong, at least in his mind. That attitude was not about to change. And on the evening of August 10th, it got worse, with Mauricio and Ricardo complaining that John had left a tiny crumb he picked up from the floor on the little table. Ricardo was in the way, and John figured that he could throw it in the trash or toilet for him. Moreover, It was unclear whose breadcrumb it was. But Mauricio chose to start yelling and let

John knew that he was the one who set the rules for the cell and that his rule was to leave the table clean.

So John had to step up his efforts to find a new cell quickly, if possible. He did so the next day. Providentially, *gendarme* Cabo Ortiz was running 118 that day, and he was always friendly to John. “Would you mind if I changed cells?” John asked. Ortiz agreed so long as the new cellmates do not mind. So he and John went up to Ismael to inquire, who indicated that he did not have seniority in the cell. He had to ask cellmate Rubén who said, “No.” John figured that he must still be sore over their last chess game, which would also explain Rubén’s absence from religious meetings recently.

Then Manuel made an unusual appearance on the *patio*. He stopped coming down once he started his semislave labor job in the colonel’s office. Actually, he was now living alone after kicking Karim out for doing something errant with his cell phone, apparently putting Manuel in danger of being denied parole benefits. So he was looking for a new cellmate and approached John, who accepted immediately. Ortiz then approved the move, and the two men executed it in the next hour. Mauricio and Ricardo must have been surprised when they got back. Hopefully, Silva would not overturn the decision once he returned from quarantine.

The next day, Manuel found Castro early and told him not to remove John. But Castro acted as if he did not know it, and Sergio had to tell him to unlock John’s secondfloor cell (reserved for *mozos*) after he opened each lock on the third or fourth floors. “After the morning lineup, come to my office,” he ordered. John was, of course, concerned, and while waiting for roll call, Ismael counseled him what he should say to Castro, who was just looking for a way to cause trouble. “Short and sweet: there were personal problems that arose during our cohabitation, and Cabo Ortiz authorized and facilitated the change,” John replied. Castro still tried to press him for more information, adding (falsely) that he was now in charge of the *módulo* and needed to know more details. John said that he understood that Silva was in charge, and he had already recommended moving John to another cell before he went to quarantine. Castro replied that he was temporarily in charge and let John go.

For the time being, John was in the middle bunk with nothing but the ceiling above him and optimistic that his shoulder pain might be alleviated, to Castro’s obvious chagrin. He had hoped to find a reason to force John back into the cell with Mauricio and Ricardo. “God had other plans and protected me from this modern-day Alexander the Coppersmith who had done to Apostle Paul so much harm (2 Timothy 4:14),” John mused.

Lots of new people were arriving at 118 at the end of July and early August. Santiago was out of quarantine, and two *reos en tránsito* appeared in 118A on July 27th and three more on the 31st, waiting to be set free or to be taken to hearings for their cases in Santiago. Others there, like Rodrigo (“RoRo”) fought with superiors as a *rancho* cook (he was caught stealing meat) and was *en tránsito* while awaiting transport to *módulo* 112 (disciplinary). He was in *Rufo’s módulo* 105 before coming to 118 and was booted from there, too, due to a theft problem (as John found out later). Apparently, he was in 113 as well.

He pulled off a scam with John (who was very susceptible to Chilean scam artists) on August 2nd. He offered to sell John his Huawei cell phone cheap (30,000 pesos or USD40) to avoid it

being confiscated when he was frisked at the new *módulo*. John thought he would buy it for Ismael so that he could participate in the Historic Baptists online Zoom group. However, the cell phone sale turned into John being ripped off 30,000 pesos. During the exchange, he took the money, then pulled back the phone he was handing to John and asked Karim to remove private data from it. He said he would give John a Samsung S7 instead of the Huawei, and that should have tipped John off, but it did not.

It turns out that the phone was Karim's, and *RoRo* had asked him to let him look it over. Instead, he sold it to John. But once Karim got it to remove the data, he realized it was his. John went to his cell *en tránsito* and asked for a refund. *RoRo* said the funds were given to another *mozo*. Lies on top of lies. John knew then that he had been had. John reflected, "The mendacious nature of both criminals and politicians seems to provide a direct nexus between the two. Neither one seems to have an iota of respect for property rights. Both violate them regularly and often enjoy lavish parasitic existences on account of plying their trades." (Upon hearing the tale, a libertarian friend was kind enough to send John's wife 30,000 pesos to compensate him.)

The next day, *RoRo* tried to make good on the sale but could not get out of the *patio* since Cabo Castro had come and refused to open the door. The following day, just before he left, *RoRo* took John to his cell and offered him a Motorola Moto (which unbeknownst to John he had just stolen) instead, but he would have to pay more. John said, "Forget it." He wanted the Huawei phone or his money back. Shortly thereafter, *RoRo* was gone, and so was John's money; lesson learned. Karim conveniently denied any direct involvement in the scam.

The *gendarme* on duty sat at the dining room table with John and Karim, listening to the tale about *RoRo*. He said there was little chance of John getting his money back. Ismael and John's wife chided him, too. Then *Rufo* showed up and wanted 5,000 pesos. John refused and said he was fed up with people taking advantage of him, reminding *Rufo* that he had not given John his things and had lied and also had not attended the religious meetings on Zoom. To top it all off, he was just scammed by *RoRo*. *Rufo* had begged to see John outside of 118, and the *gendarme* permitted it. But *Rufo* went away empty-handed. John said, "I am not an ATM," reminding him of all the booty he had already gotten off John.

Later that day, Mauricio came back from his semislave labor in the infirmary and said, "Did you receive a cell phone today, John?" He replied, "No, I paid for one from *RoRo*, but he scammed me and never gave it to me, although he took my money." "Well," Mauricio (now joined by Ricardo) said, "*RoRo* stole the phone, and when he was cornered, he said that he sold it to the *gringo*." That is a serious fault in prison, and the victim from 105 said they were going to stab John and possibly his two roommates! John explained that he had no phone to return. Later, a man came to the cell who would report to those in 105, and Mauricio told him that John had been scammed and never received the phone. John then realized the danger of buying things from other inmates and that even if *RoRo* showed up with a phone one day, he could not receive it. He also realized just how gullible he had been.

Mauricio never really accepted the forgive and forget principle. First, *Rufo* and now *RoRo* proved to be too much." John was too gullible and posed a danger to himself and his cellmates potential parole benefits," he reasoned. Then on August 6th, when John was commenting to the Historic Baptists group on Zoom at 11:09 p.m., Mauricio said, "Speak softer, we have to work

tomorrow.” John retorted that he had been doing the same for the last six months without complaint, and the rule set down by Mauricio was “no talking after midnight.” It was still early. He cut his sermon short anyway.

The next morning Ricardo also asked John to be quieter so he could sleep. Never mind that John had to tolerate their TV and music while he was trying to sleep. “It is only one night a week, Thursdays, for fifteen to twenty minutes that I have my religious evening meeting, and it is important to me.” This fact mattered little to Mauricio and Ricardo, who said it was “common sense” to cut off all talk once another cellmate was sleeping. John did not agree and saw the rule as arbitrary and capricious, and probably Satan-inspired in his nominally Mormon cellmate, yet he agreed to submit to it. However, he notified them that he would be looking to find a new cell once Silva returned. He felt very unappreciated for all the costs he bore in the cell and that he did more than his share of the cleaning.

They must have felt some shame since they stopped eating the food that John’s wife brought. She regularly bought special orders of chips and other snacks for Mauricio and never charged him. They ate bountifully at John’s expense. Now, this was the thanks John got: a slap in the face. Loss of floor space and convenience for John with almost no effect on Mauricio’s cell space to accommodate Ricardo had been another setback for John, although Mauricio quipped that he had not reduced the ceiling over John’s bunk by four inches (a magnanimous gesture). Mauricio was so blind in his order giving and rule-setting (typical of Meiers-Briggs guardians) that he could not see his selfishness, self-righteousness, and domineering arrogance. He told John three times at least over his tenure in the cell, “If you don’t like it find another cell.” And that was exactly what John now intended to do.

Nevertheless, the next day, John found it might not be easy to make the obvious switch to Rubén and Ismael’s cell. Ismael said that he wanted to change cells too on account of the perverted talk of Rubén and other problems he preferred not to discuss. “Never say something bad about someone when they are not present.” Moreover, Miami and pentecostal Luchito (John’s second choice) would not work either. The upper bunk was fixed and left no sleeping space up top. There seemed to be discontent everywhere. For instance, everyone seemed more on edge about cell phones at that time. Ismael took out a rubber band from his backpack as he watched Cabo Ortiz frisk and searched the clothing of an *en tránsito reo* for drugs across the *patio* midday on August 6th. He put it around his wrist and slid his cell phone’s battery under it, and covered both with his sleeve. “This way, if they get my cell phone, it will be of no use and not resaleable.”

He then moved the cell itself from the thin metal cabinet in the barber room and put it atop the fluorescent light fixture. “One must constantly be changing the location of one’s cell, so the *pacos* do not get it,” he explained to John (who was the only other person in the room). The common evangelical faith that John and Ismael shared had drawn them to be closer, trusting friends over the preceding four months. But finding appreciative, respectful, trusting people was getting harder to do. Carlos and Aaron would be other cellmate choices for either John or Ismael, but they were already together with Sergio. The hassle just further added to John’s litany of problems, not the least of which was poor health.

Due to Coronavirus and spurious concerns that John would not have recovered well from sickness and quarantine ten days prior, the district attorney got the court to postpone his trial for

over two more months to September 28th. That decision was terrible. John would have to continue suffering unjustly for more time, awaiting trial for nearly eleven months. He hoped that no one would get the bright idea of putting him in another *módulo*. He made a point to be very friendly with *sargento segundo* Silva from the outset, and, indeed, he enjoyed a good relationship with him. And, so, for the time being, life went on.

John played chess, exceeding 1,000 wins on July 26th and only 64 losses and 14 ties in 8 to 9 months. John had stopped playing chess with Rubén on July 29th due to a disagreement over the local rules regarding having to move a piece after touching it, which Rubén wanted to change in the middle of the game. John's record was 1,008 wins, 65 losses, and 14 stalemates at the time. He continued to play perhaps ten games a week with Ismael, who was a slightly more formidable opponent. He also read books and worked on his own books. By this time, he had not seen his wife or any friend in nearly four months. He was thankful to have his cell phone at least. Nonetheless, by this time, his other eye was acting up (even worse) than his right eye had been doing since mid-April. But neither the trial court nor Supreme Court was willing to let him go to an ophthalmologist or to home arrest. It was a discouraging time. Still, John took some solace from knowing that he was actively engaged in discipleship or even a pastoral ministry of sorts with Ismael, and often Aaron (Rubén had stopped attending after the chess dispute). He also had a chance to witness to cellmate Ricardo on July 27th with quasi-Mormon Mauricio listening. There had been other opportunities to witness for Christ too, at least with part of the message, with Karim, *Che*, Raúl (both), Waldo, José, Alexis, along with Sebastián and others *en tránsito*. Furthermore, he enjoyed small audiences listening to him teach some principles of public choice economics or libertarian political philosophy.

John wrote to his children and friends outside so that they might know something of what he was going through, telling them about his daily life and misfortunes. For example, he said, "It is not a 'normal' life here with a moment to enjoy. I rarely laugh or smile. I often must avoid conflict and gossip. There is a lot of temptation to do evil. One must often resist bad people. There is no comfortable and quiet place to think on the *patio*, at least not for long. I live with bad or recidivistic people who are malformed socially. Hence, I stick out like a sore thumb since I am the least offensive of all here. I am generous. I think of others. I am considerate of my cellmates. All day I sit playing chess, reading, memorizing Italian words, writing books, sometimes watching the news or a movie that Rubén or another *machucado* puts on his television lent to those in the dining room. I walk for fifteen minutes and often use the bench press with little weight on it (twenty-five reps with maybe one hundred pounds). I suffer from poor diet and physical problems with my eye, skin, hearing, and (early on) my back."

"We worship twice a week. In the cell, I sing, I read my Bible, and I pray and read books every day. I participate in cleaning *en tránsito* cells with other men down on the *patio*. Sometimes I talk to others about other topics, but mostly it is not worth it. They often have limited mental capacity. In the afternoon and at night, I use cell phones to communicate with people I know or for my legal defense. By the grace of God, I have my books that I am writing to help me maintain my mental health. Some ignorant people who harbor envy and resentment hate me and seek to harm me. They hate me because of my knowledge, my faith, my social class, my ability in chess, my ability to produce books, that I have traveled a lot, and because I have visitors who bring me food 'from the street' and a little money to spend, while they have little or nothing."

“ Due to the Covid-19 quarantine, I did not have any visitors to come to see me (wife or friends) for over seven months. There is no adequate medical care here, and one is subjected to humiliation, chains, and various abuses. The bathroom and bed are very uncomfortable, and I have not had the luxury of showering with hot water for almost nine months. They say I live on ‘the beach’ compared to other jail modules, and that is certainly true of *módulo* 109, but it is hardly paradise, and I hope that my suffering is evident to those reading what I say. I understand now why the Apostle Paul asked the brethren to ‘remember’ his ‘chains’ in Colossians 4:18. I really miss seeing people I know after five months without visitors.”

John and his wife spent time working on scrutinizing comments by opposing lawyers, the prosecutor, and alleged victims, finding many inconsistencies and outright lies, not to mention political persecution. His rightist, activist friend Pablo (not a prisoner) had been helping John’s public image. For instance, he created tweets and videos, proving that John was neither a racist nor a white supremacist, which were two outrageous lies of the Left widely circulated in the media. Pablo also helped raise money for John’s legal fees and his wife’s support. Too, he tried to find John a private ophthalmologist to evaluate his eye impairment and black spots with “flashlights.” Indeed, John enjoyed wide support from such rightist men and groups, military supporters, Christians (especially Baptists and Presbyterians), and libertarians. That was far more than most *reos* had.

John had also developed various medical problems over his first ten months in jail. Each one of these was followed by slow, poor, mediocre, or non-existent health care that was perceived as an obvious example of persecution by the Left and its media and judicial henchmen. For instance, a week after getting back to 118, John developed a long-term bumpy rash over much of his body. Ruling out bugs, bedbugs, ticks, and mites, the penal doctor Alvarado finally concluded that the itchy grief was rare adult roseola (even though John had no fever) related to his recent Covid19 infection. John went through several different failed treatments before arriving at this diagnosis on August 5th, long after he was tested for Coronavirus infection on June 25th. However, no blood test was done to see if internal organs (lungs, liver, kidney) had been adversely affected when John was so sick with Covid-19, pneumonia, and kidney stones four to six weeks earlier, leading to the rash. John’s paramedic friend Panchito explained, “laboratory resources are being devoted to Covid-19 testing instead of other diseases.”

In addition, John suffered daily from biting pain in his left shoulder, which was clearly the result of being so many months in his short, narrow bed. The floor space the triple bunk fit into was just two meters wide, and John, measuring 1.89 meters (6’3”), could touch his head to one wall and stretch out his toes and touch the other. However, the welded crossbar had to be removed to allow the stretch, and it was only extracted at one end. The feet had to go to that end, and a pillow could be propped over the crossbar on the other end where John laid his head. That meant that his left arm was packed against the outside wall while John was lying on his back so many hours a day. Rolling over did not do much good since his light fixture and utility shelf was installed directly above, and he had to be careful not to hit them, and thus avoid breaking something or knocking something off that would inevitably fall through the crack to the filthy floor on the wall-side of the bed, a section of the floor difficult to clean due to the immovable bed above it limiting accessibility. On the other side was Mauricio’s wooden shoe rack, leaving John boxed in and unable to stretch his arms out all night. The chronic pain was excruciating at times but rotating his arm on the *patio* during the day, stretching, and doing some bench press

seemed to provide temporary relief. Still, John had to put up with this pain for many months. It simply was not possible to improve his sleeping arrangements. All jail beds were the same. Prisoners' comfort and convenience had zero priority or importance for Chilean jailors. In fact, the more the *machucados* suffered, the better, or so it seemed.

On August 13th, Karim had a videoconference court hearing where he was supposed to do trial preparation. Instead of moving forward, the process was postponed yet again, another five weeks --more painful waiting in jail for that political scapegoat (albeit he was likely guilty of some of it). The prosecutor was asking for twenty-five years in prison for the sum of the litany of crimes he was accused of. Most figured he was guilty of something after observing his sneaky, shifty, or shady behavior in 118. Back on the *patio*, Karim approached John in the barber room and tried to sell him a little Huawei cell phone for 60,000 pesos (he said the *paco* who had it would take 55,000, equivalent to USD75). John was not keen on getting scammed again, and Ismael counseled John not to buy it. John complied. Manuel could not believe the nerve of the guy for even asking after what had happened with *RoRo*.

While Karim was away, Cabo Castro (back in charge of the *módulo* that day) must have been bored, and his small brain led him to call all *reos* to form into a roll call line again and inquire as to what cleaning duties each of the eleven men present had (Karim not yet back). He went down the line, criticizing Ismael for taking out the trash without permission and rebuking everyone for taking advantage of Aaron, who was always busy cleaning up something, it seemed. But nailing John was his real motivation. Like the other accused men, Carlos, Aaron, and Karim, John did not receive a monthly "conduct" rating to be used to obtain early release or time-away-from-jail "benefits."

Like them, John was not required to work or clean up. But he, like the others, had always chipped in so that the *gendarmes* would be happy to keep them in 118. Besides, they lived there, too. Castro spoke out of a combination of spite and scorn, "What do you do?" John replied that he helped clean the *en tránsito* cells. "No one is up there now. You clean the patio bathrooms and showers instead" (two of each). "What will you need?" John said a bucket, a floor squeegee, and Clorox would be adequate. He had a passing thought to simply tell the chimp-brained shorty to go take a hike, but in the end, he decided it was not worth it. Miami later said he would help out, and Aaron actually did help spread out the wastewater on the floor that day after John pushed it into the *patio*. The Clorox never arrived. Like Sergio had said a couple of days earlier, "*Gringo*, your biggest problem in prison (cell living or otherwise) is that you put up with everything without a fight." He had a point. John just wanted to lay low and get out as soon as possible with the fewest problems possible.

The next day, August 14th, proved to be harrowing as well. It started out fine, with John bringing peanut butter and raspberry jam down to share with Ismael and Aaron for breakfast. He later made lunch sandwiches for all three from the same. Manuel, John's wife, and many others in Chile do not like peanut butter. But others do, including Ismael (especially), Aaron, *Rufo*, Mauricio, Ricardo, and a couple of others in 118. Just another boring but typical day in jail, John thought. But everything else would not turn out well that day. At midday, John had used the bench press a couple of times, jumping in while Ismael and Karim were doing some reps. Right afterward, he went back to reading a book as usual in the barber room. All of a sudden *Che* went berserk. He was washing clothes outside the little room where John was sitting, using all the

Spanish expletives he could to curse John and call him a hypocrite (although no one knew quite why). The diatribe amounted to violent, visceral, incoherent rambling. John went out to see why he was going off, even though he could not understand all that was being said, and *Che* threatened to gash his forehead and assail him. John replied, “Are you threatening me? I am not scared,” punching the air with his fists. *Che* was in great shape and a bodybuilder, albeit much shorter than John (by a foot), and did not bench much more than John even after he had been weakened by his Covid-19 and pneumonia experience.

John’s words and actions enraged *Che* even more. “Shut up! Don’t say another word!” the hate-filled Argentine and former cellmate cried. He then picked up a bucket of laundry detergent water and doused John with it, cracking the bucket. John showed self-control. Fighting back would just get him booted out of 118, and victory would not be easy against rabid *Che* either. So he walked back into the room, wiped off his wet glasses, and cleaned himself off. As he picked up his book again, *Che* was still going off yelling about how he had warned John not to exercise while he was doing so, insulting and cursing him as he did. Of course, everyone in the yard was watching the spectacle. *Che* walked across the *patio*, and John overheard Karim (*Che*’s cellmate) trying to reason with him. But he was enraged, so livid that he could kill, and thus paid Karim no attention.

Ismael sneaked over, “Just suck it up and let it go.” John replied, I will defend myself if absolutely necessary, but otherwise, I will avoid conflict, as my Christian duty is to try to live at peace with all men, according to Romans 12:18. Aaron came over as well, probably further enraging *Che* because he and Ismael were his only arms-length friends on the *patio*, just as it must have galled him every Wednesday and Sunday when they met with John for an evangelical worship service. *Che* continued to utter his vitriol and venom from afar. John took it in stride, relaxed. Karim appeared, using the mirror to shave. John asked him what *Che*’s problem was. And he explained that John had disobeyed his order to not work out while he was. Aaron then said, “You know who won today, don’t you?” John replied, “I did, obviously, since I took the moral high ground and controlled myself.” Proverbs 20:3 says that “It is honorable for a man to stop striving since any fool can start a quarrel.” Aaron nodded in agreement.

That morning the three had talked about their Christian walks and even differences between Baptist and Pentecostal church governments, underscoring why it was so detrimental to Baptist congregations for their members to be ignorant. No one had anticipated the upcoming altercation. Sergio came in, too, and was jawing about his court case, telling the others how the girl he was convicted of molesting would turn eighteen next month and she had promised to testify that she and her mother lied in order to put him in prison on false charges out of spite. The state would then have to pay him 140 million pesos (about USD200,000) for wrongful imprisonment. John butted in and asked what he could do in the case of *Che*, who still wants to kill him. Sergio, unaware of what had happened since he was not on the *patio* at the time, told him that a fight or even just taking a blow from *Che* without returning a punch would get *both* kicked out of 118 unless John wrote up a request for protection. Then, if *Che* attacked him in the future, he would be gone, and John would stay.

John mused that option, but others reminded him that reporting other *reos* would be looked down upon by the other inmates. After everyone was locked in their cells, other than *mozos*, Carlos (who also had troubles with *Che*) peered through the cell door vent and asked John what had

gone down with *Che*, further stating that no one had the right to monopolize the weights on the *patio*. John wondered out loud if he thought a report should be made to *Cabo Ortiz*, then on duty. Carlos said he would see what could be done about it and would also be asking cellmate Aaron about his take regarding the ruckus and spat. Maybe *Che* was about to have a problem.

John was in good with all the *gendarmes* besides the evil Castro. Just yesterday, former *gendarme* Manuel's friend (and current *gendarme*) had sent John a voice message through Manuel's cell phone saying it was an honor to speak with him, seeing he considered John to be a national hero for standing up against the criminals and communists by force in *Reñaca*, and just how glad he was to know that he was Manuel's cellmate now. *Che*, on the other hand, was thought of as a lowlife robber and just more Argentine scum in Chilean jails. It was pretty clear who had the upper hand with the guards. John would simply wait and see what tomorrow would bring.

Sure enough, lots happened on the 15th. Sergio asked John if he had put in a written complaint yet. "No, should I have?" *Chuncoco* nodded in reply, looking like he was after blood. John did so, even though Karim came around and tried to convince him otherwise. "Chuncoco just wants to use you to get back at *Che* for not buying cigarettes from him; it won't help you in the least." He was mistaken. *Cabo Cisternas* took the written complaint and read it, albeit somewhat puzzled. John got Sergio to come over and clarify. A short time later, *Cisternas* called John back in from the *patio* and told him the captain would soon be calling him to hear the formal complaint. John was not keen on doing anything like that at all, but when Captain Aguirre finally did call him, with Major Toledo and other *gendarmes* present, they assured him he was doing the right thing, as not doing it would just make *Che* feel empowered.

John struck up a nice and funny conversation with the officers about problems with learning English or Spanish, the injustices involved in his case and Manuel's, drugs, and other problems in prison, as well as other topics. While the conversation was going on, a couple of *cabos* came in and dumped sock toes full of hundreds of hits of crack cocaine individually wrapped in paper. The major confirmed that the artifacts were drugs and that drugs were more common in jail than on the street. As predicted, everyone in the room turned out to be John's supporters, calling him *el pistolero de Reñaca*, and they immediately did all they could to write up the formal complaint and get *Che* booted out of 118.

John was surprised by the quick action. He was brought back to his cell, and then *Cisternas* reported that *Che* was gone, taken to disciplinary *módulo* 112, supposedly the worst spot in the prison since the nastiest prisoners were put there for their bad behavior. (A couple of days later, he would supposedly be reassigned to another, less toxic *módulo*; but the idea was trashed until further notice.) Although some in 118 and 118A might now consider John a snitch, they would also fear him somewhat, or at least not mess with him for fear of reprisals.

Everyone would also hear that the *gendarmes* were generally on his side; after his long conversation with the officers, treating him like one of them and even sharing their plate of cookies with him. It became clear that both he and they were on the same side politically. Manuel suggested that John not talk about the incident with anyone, even though everyone in 118 would notice *Che*'s absence, and it would be the talk of the *patio* for a while. John figured he was probably right, and he saw no reason to gloat about God's favorable Providence and

protection in his life.

Chapter XII

A Gentle Tongue Breaks a Bone

Manuel had a different bathing system set up in the cell. The kettle-heated hot water and cold water were mixed in a smaller bucket equipped with a garden spigot at its base and placed on a rack over the shower stall. Open once to wet the body, then close; shampoo and soap up, then open again to rinse off. It provided a nice improvement over the pouring system used by most others and that John had used for eight months. Having cleaned up and made his turkey, cheese, avocado, tomato, and lettuce sandwiches, John headed down to the *patio* where people were commenting on why *Che* was not around. Only Karim said anything to John directly, bemoaning his cellmate's plight being punished and taken away quickly without all his possessions.

Other than customary "good mornings," John only had limited conversations with Karim and Miami (who was washing clothes nearby). In fact, no one else came close to John for some time, including Ismael and Aaron, who usually eat breakfast with him, perhaps being concerned about possible repercussions with respect to *Che*. No one mentioned it if it was so. John had to ask them if they wanted to have Sunday church service (finishing up the study on the biblical doctrine of sanctification) and the Lord's Supper. They said, "Yes." Things then got back to normal, other than the fact that no one had played chess with John for a few days. He still went about leaving Ismael, Miami, and a couple of others one of the *frugalé* wrapped gummy candies he kept in his pocket for that purpose, enjoying being generous and trying to bring a little levity into the otherwise doleful existence of the *reos*.

John was generous with food in general with people who attended the worship services, and some others, especially his cellmates. Unlike other *machucados*, John brought in a lot of food and goodies from his wife's weekly *encomienda* bags and purchases from the prison's kiosk and had a what's-mine-is-yours policy in the cell. People closely associated with him thus enjoyed the benefits they reaped. Manuel loved to arrange food and equipment in the cell and was more obsessive-compulsive about cleanliness than John's mother, and her house was so clean you could eat off the floor! He noticed every speck or thread on the floor, never left trash in the cell during the day, and cleaned floors and dishes himself with both Clorox and dish soap used for plates, utensils, plastic containers, and pans, and Clorox, wax, and fragrance on the floors. The cleaning routine was a daily event, sometimes twice.

John tried to help but rarely succeeded initially, especially since his efforts were deemed substandard compared to Manuel's. He managed to get a few dishes washed now and then, and maybe a chair or other surface wiped down, but not much more besides making his own bed. Manuel was on top of any mess instantly. For example, Carlos had come up to install a utility shelf for John, drilling holes in the concrete walls and making a little mess. Predictably, Manuel hardly showed his face on the *patio* (he did not work at the Colonel's office on Sundays), first sleeping in until after 9 a.m. (skipping roll call was one of the privileges he enjoyed) and then supervising Carlos and the cleanup effort. John came up to help clean a little bit, but Manuel did 95% of the work, moving much furniture into the hall while cleaning walls, beds, and the floor.

Major Toledo came by while Manuel was doing so on August 16th and informed him that *Che* would likely be returning to 118 after three days of punishment in 112. John wondered how that

might work out. Without other formal complaints against *Che* besides John's, the Major said, he could not be permanently removed from 118. John's surprising power may have ended up being not quite so extraordinary after all. Silva was also going to be back soon and would have to be brought up to speed with events that took place while he was in quarantine. There always had to be some drama going on in 118.

Speaking of drama, Karim was one of those people always looking for an angle and who enjoyed employing deceit, trickery, and lying to gain some advantage. He had a criminal nature that burst out to anyone spending time with him. He was a little younger than John's second son (30) and was obsessed with sex, which he, over the months he had often talked about with many of the *reos* in 118's dining room. He did not get far talking sex with John, who threw out Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." In order to stymie one such incipient conversation wherein Karim flaunted his fornication. John further noted that he was likewise happier now that he gladly had far fewer thoughts about sex running through his mind daily than when he was thirty. "Why in the world would I want Viagra, Karim, since it would roll me back into that dread servitude?" Karim had no reply but did throw off a puzzled look.

Karim had lived with Manuel for over seven months. One day, upon seeing Manuel cover-up after coming out of the shower, he said, "Why are you embarrassed to be naked in the cell while I am here? Is it because you think your penis is too small?" That remark well reflected his mindset, and Manuel thought it was absurd, not to mention out of line with the way he had been raised. Upon hearing the tale, John concurred. Even though he spent many days in the pool locker room, he neither went out of his way to show his nakedness to anyone or see the genitalia of others. He simply did not care and did not know or associate with any men who did.

It is amazing that Manuel and Karim got along in the same cell for so long, but in the end, Manuel got sick of his antics and kicked him out. Yet such commentary and behavior represented Karim at his perverse, bombastic, opinionated best, although he never could overcome his general ignorance. He could not get through school without getting kicked out for bad behavior, yet he still thought of himself as king of the hill and smart. No one ever saw him reading a book. He was similar to most Chileans John knew who never let ignorance get in the way of expressing an opinion. Although he was politically from the far-Right and somewhat libertarian in his politics (especially since he enjoyed consuming some drugs), John did not think much of him intellectually, morally, or religiously (his Palestinian background was Eastern Orthodox, but he rejected the faith and proclaimed himself to be an atheist).

After *Che* threatened John, Karim was noticeably unhappy. While in the middle of the *patio*, he called John out as a liar and said he had overheard the whole ruckus and *Che* never said he was going to kill him, as John had declared to the *gendarmes*, but merely ranted that he was going to beat the hell out of John. John said he disagreed and that he did not lie. "*Che* said he was going to hit me and put a vertical gash in my forehead (as he drew with his finger during the altercation). That is what I told them, and it sounds like a death threat to me. *Che* was not planning to use anesthesia and a scalpel." In response, Karim just repeated his accusation louder and started saying he had a Catholic Bible and knew that lying was wrong and that John had lied. He was the sort of guy who thought that repeating the same opinion ten times, each time incrementally louder, would make his opinion correct. He even appealed to Ismael and Aaron, who just wanted

to stay out of the discussion. The odd thing is that Karim and *Che* had gotten into an altercation on the *patio* a few months earlier, and punches were exchanged (Karim being almost a foot taller than *Che*, but bench pressing much less than him, or than John, Ismael, and others for that matter). No one was the clear winner of that spat. So it was a bit ironic now to see him defending *Che* against John now.

Months ago, when there was still visitation, Karim and his right-wing, anti-communist family were all friendly supporters of John and Manuel. Now Karim was siding with thugs like drug trafficker Moroni and *Che*, who had purportedly violently robbed his former employer, a middle-aged lady in Reñaca. Perhaps jail brings out the true nature of people and birds of a feather flock together.

Karim was an elected entry-level politician, too. That's why his case was so scandalous and on television as much or more than John's was. Karim had twice as many charges against him as John, and the prosecutor was asking for 25+ years in jail for theft, drug dealing, money laundering, trafficking in political influence, etc. The picture becomes clearer; the more puzzle pieces are put in place. John took Karim's vociferous opinions with a grain of salt. Needless to say, Karim got no *frugalé*.

Beyond the illnesses he endured (and recovered from) while in 109, by mid-August, John had to put up with both his eyes having thousands of black spots and floating objects that hampered his vision and reading ability. The condition was not improving as the public hospital doctor had said it would in April. He also had some remnants of his rash remaining and somewhat itchy skin. To top it all off, the crown and one side of his lower-left molar broke off. These physical maladies went largely untreated, and few seemed to care, adding to John's unjust suffering. If he were out of jail, these problems would have been treated or taken care of right away, but not once one is being held for trial within the Chilean prison system. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that a prisoner's woes and hassles are not usually confined to him alone. His tenure cost his friends and family money and time for shopping, goods delivery, and visitation.

For instance, problems that John's wife had to face weekly, especially during the Covid-19 quarantine, to keep John supplied, were hardly trivial. They entailed shopping for and cooking enough food for a week for both John and his cellmates, carefully checking prison rules on what is allowed to enter the prison and how to find ways to sneak in disallowed items. Another stop for her is the pharmacy to acquire prescription drugs, which are a hassle to get into the prison but which are essential for her husband's health (especially given that prison infirmary drugs are mediocre or of inferior quality).

Sometimes a good friend like Valentín Navarrete had to go to a pharmacy in Santiago to get some hard-to-find prescription, or to go to one of John's doctors in Santiago to get the script itself, every six months, and then arrange for delivery to his wife who lived forty-five minutes away by car. Without a prescription, the medications would not be eligible for the 80% discount provided through his private medical insurance. Valentín is a particular historic Baptist with theology identical to John's. The two labor together in a teaching ministry for historic Baptists online through the Zoom platform. Valentín was someone John trusted implicitly and was one of his closest friends. The feeling was mutual, and Valentín could be counted on to do anything in his power to help John subject only to the constraints placed on him by the availability of his free

time and resources. The two men stayed in contact regularly, speaking in Spanish.

John also has other close friends and supporters like Joe, Ken, and Bert, who are monolingual in English. In reality, John has been blessed with so many good Christian, libertarian, and rightist friends, and it hardly does them justice to name fifty-one of them briefly here: Luis, Alejandro, Cecilia, Fabiola, two Sebastián, Pablo, Bob, Patrick, Mark, Matthew, Jim, Greg, Jorge, Hermógenes, Álvaro, Nadia, Claudio, Lidia, Jano, Ricardo, Joanne, Thompson, Jeremie Davinci, John, Linda, Pam, Maria, Elías, Patricio, Dusan, two Edwins, Mary, Eduardo, Jonathan, Nicolás, two Felipes, Obed, Francisco, Karl, Steve, Rodrigo, Pedro, Giovanni, Sergio, Daniel, Criss, Gonzalo, another Ken, and Mauricio. They were far more acquaintances who also helped out a little bit, which added up to a lot. And John's predicament brought out the best in these loyal people.

Moreover, John and other inmates need shoes, clothing, plastic chairs, books, Tupperware, hangers, and sundry other items that require budget-minimizing shopping. Needs are endless for a dependent husband in jail, and the wife and often other family members or friends must take care of him like a dependent child. Money must be smuggled in so he can have a cell phone, other and better food, laundry service, lighting, cell shelving, and then keep putting money on his cell service provider SIM card. Many of these items are regularly stolen, and thus, even more money is needed to replace them. The list of needs is ongoing and effectively endless. People simply have no idea until they have to experience a loved one in jail.

Then there are the logistics (especially for non-drivers like John's wife) of taking the city bus (3.5 hours round trip for her), or Uber and Cabify, which entail considerable added cost. Pamela sits on the bus tired, even sleeping. She often thinks, "Week in and week out, I dread waiting in line at the pharmacy and supermarket (especially under quarantine rigidities), suffer taking public transportation, and then have to deal with the long line of people (mainly women) waiting to have their bags inspected by the moody and sometimes quite disagreeable *gendarmes*." She wondered if her husband and others realized just how much she lacked sleep on Saturday morning, how boring the task-at-hand is, not to mention its monotony and the annoyance it provokes, plus the occasional fear she felt from having to go through dangerous parts of town." She often told herself, "This is hardly the fairy-princess life I signed up for and not even a 'normal' life. Indeed, nothing is normal about being married to John, whether good or bad. Yet to be faithful to what God requires of me as a faithful wife, I forge onward week after week and mortify the rage that sometimes rises in my mind against my husband. Does anyone know how hard this is for me?"

She had some real and valid concerns. "Imagine how much harder it would be for Pamela had I not secured so many supporters providing for her financial and household supplies needs," John mused. Indeed, his ongoing efforts to maintain his base of supporters and provide for his wife in difficult times showed his love for her and his commitment to his biblical duties. Without a doubt, the hassle faced by his wife (especially) and many others is permanent and fastidious. Hence its fulfillment shows deep or sincere love for husband or, in the case of others, father, brother, son, friend, fellow-Christian, fellow-libertarian, etc., who drive and motivate them over the long term.

John was fortunate to have so many dedicated people supporting him: wife, some children, a

cousin, and several (many) dozen friends, clients, political companions, and church friends, rallying to the call to help someone whom the great majority consider innocent and suffering wrongfully, not to mention intentionally denied proper medical care for serious illnesses. The ordeal thus serves as a tremendous, informative lesson for everyone, tending to undermine confidence in the state and its wayward system of criminal justice. It provided a means to undertake good works not just to support John monthly but also for his wife and the ongoing household needs while the breadwinner is imprisoned. One can see why, for many people, it is easy to forget a prisoner or want to be out from under the burden. Some in *módulo* 118 and most in 109 faced that tragic and doleful reality. The more John compared his situation relative to others around him, the more he humbly appreciated his backers and their ongoing commitment to him. Even more impressive is that the longer the ordeal continued, the greater the number of supporters became, and the more intense their commitment in nearly all cases.

It turned out that *reos* could be charitable, too. On August 21st, Sergio was running around with his list of *reos* in 118 and asking each one to sign next to his name. His request struck John as so odd that Sergio had to explain it twice.” Other than bread and tea, we are voluntarily giving up our breakfast provisions in order to help needy people in the area.” Such provisions would include individual or group packaged yogurts, brownies, cookies, cheese slices, ham lunch meat, jam, butter, and margarine, one of these items per day. John reviewed the written document to be sent to *gendarme* management and saw the food was destined to go to a poorer section of eastern Viña del Mar on Limache Avenue. The poor in Chile had been hit hard by six months of Coronavirus-generated economic slowdown and quarantine, and many people had not worked for many months. John predicted this economic calamity back in January when state intervention was just getting started. Now, many poorer people were better off in jail with communist-style food rations than living free on the street or in their homes. “I wonder how that fact will change incentives to commit crimes,” John mused out loud. Aaron, who now cleaned up after the elderly and disabled men in 118A after *Che*’s departure, said, “Some of the sickly in 118A do not want to leave. As bad as it is here, they still live better than they would outside. They intentionally delay court hearings as much as possible.” Pretty telling when people start preferring to be incarcerated than free. What was becoming of Chile? He signed Sergio’s paper.

At any rate, John wanted nothing more than to get out as soon as possible. He continued to analyze his case and help prepare for his upcoming trial, all the while enjoying his wife’s good food left in 118’s freezer and taken out a little every day, and ever-grateful for his generous friends and family members who so graciously supported Pamela and him. They did not live high-on-the-hog by any means, but basic needs were always met. What’s more, Castro was in charge of the *módulo* that day, but (curiously) did not pester him one bit. He got a lot of reading and writing done!

Castro was also around on August 22nd and was pretty nasty with those who got to a morning roll call late, threatening to lower their conduct scores for future “tardiness.” All prisoners must be in line at 8:45.” In reality, no other *gendarme* was like Castro. He had a special thirst for showing his power and commanding respect. In addition to being somewhat stupid, he was a jerk. Few liked him. Of course, John had little to be concerned about with respect to roll call. He was one of the first to get up in the morning and one of the first men down on the *patio*. However, around noon, he was worried that Castro might have been responsible for one of his *encomienda* bags having gone missing. Without it, he would be without meat, vegetables, and

cash for the week. John suspected Castro, but it turned out to have just been misdelivered. After investigating my phone in the *gendarme*'s office, Manuel ran over to 109 to get it, obligatorily accompanied by Castro, and bribed 109's guard with a big bag of cheese-flavored Doritos that Pamela had sent in order to let him take the food and goods while John was not present. (Manuel lied, saying that the bag had John's name on it but in reality contained items that were bought for him.) Painfully, Manuel (and John indirectly) also gave Castro a 5,000 peso payoff for his extraordinary efforts to fetch it. The bag would have been lost if John were living alone and had to rely on chimp-brained, cocky Castro for help. He was growing weary of all the hassles in jail, not to mention his worsening rash and molar and eye problems, but was glad to get his food for the week in the end. "Things could be worse; I could be back in 109."

That *módulo* was no longer used as a Covid-19 colony. There were so many cases in prison now that each *módulo* besides 118 had its own quarantine section. Pamela's mind was set at ease, too, after they called her and let her know all was well. But she continued to worry about her husband's health. His blood pressure had been low for a second day, 91 over 64, perhaps due to his prescription medication doses not being modified in a year. Or maybe it was just a fluke. One thing for certain was that he would not receive proper treatment while in jail.

John's blood pressure headed back to normal over the weekend, but the rash and itch remained. He had preached on idols with Ismael and Aaron and got to participate with the Historic Baptists group, both of which served to calm his spirit. Manuel also informed him that both *RoRo* and *Che* were still in 112. They were probably simmering with more resentment and hatred every day. That *módulo* was never cleaned and had poop and bugs everywhere, with all inmates sleeping on the floor with just a foam mattress.

Manuel changed his treatment of John, too, after a couple of weeks living in the cell together, having him do about half the cooking (more accurately reheating) and nearly all the dishwashing. To say that Manuel liked cleanliness was an understatement. He was obsessed with it and probably suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder, although John would never say so directly lest he is offended. John did tell him that he was obsessive, though, much like his mother. "My mom kept her floor so clean you could eat off it." However, Manuel was far worse than dear old mom and kept John on pins and needles (uncomfortable) all the time, and it would have been unbearable had John not had experience living with his mother and his prior church-wife, Doctor Leslie Dean Long, who had more mental disorders than you could shake a stick at and who abandoned him after just a few years of marriage, along with their infant son. In addition to being evil, she was also obsessive, bipolar, psychotic, and whatnot, even if she was an upstanding Presbyterian.

Manuel was not quite as bad as her, but he was worse than John's mother. He would not permit clean, folded underwear to be placed on the cabinet where food was prepared or eaten. Never mind that there was no other place besides the floor to put it so one could dress after getting out of the shower. All trash had to be dumped immediately, too, and the bag hanging by the door overnight had to be taken as soon as the cell was unlocked, and the men left the cell in the morning. He would not let John keep a trash bag by his bed since it would attract bugs and mice, he claimed. So John stuffed his pockets with trash and even slept with trash in them in order not to cause a ruckus. During meals, if a piece of food fell on the floor, a citation was immediately issued, and people were expected to be on their feet and getting the broom if necessary. Of

course, not a speck of poop in the toilet was permitted, or any food residue on dishes or the *micrón* (like a bit of melted cheese that dropped on to it), all of which he cleaned with Clorox first (to kill viruses) then washed with dish soap. (John quietly skipped the Clorox when he washed the dishes so as not to be scolded.) The dishes had to be dried with paper towels or toilet paper since Manuel deemed a dishrag to be too unsanitary.

Similarly, Manuel did not permit keeping or using a brush to clean the toilet bowl. Toilet paper had to be wadded up instead and used to clean off any filth by hand (plastic gloves were OK to use, though). The floor was swept twice a day at least and waxed once. Doing so often resulted in John's slippers or shoes being pushed so far under the bed that he had to get down on his hands and knees to recover them. Raid was often sprayed to kill any bug that might have stumbled in, and everything was put neatly in its place. Nothing that could be closed could be left open. If something fell on the floor, there was hell to be paid by the beleaguered cellmate, even if he was not responsible.

If John wanted to get Manuel worked up and then throw himself into action, he needed only talk about the bug he saw crawling on the wall while Manuel was sleeping or talk about how mice had gotten into the cell when John was still living with Mauricio. John marveled, too, that Manuel literally brushed his teeth for five to ten minutes. How much cleaner could he possibly get them after the first minute or two? Still, there are virtues of living with an obsessive-compulsive person, like a clean environment and decent cooking. A portable heater was used in the cell, and if John ever needed to be warmer or to find a plastic container for leftovers, Manuel was sure to have a solution. So John tried to take any bad aspects and false accusations in stride and bide his time. Manuel was due to be paroled in two months. He could be a good conversationalist, too, and was sometimes funny. He never did quite get the fact, though, that foreigners like John would often be unable to distinguish between complaints or criticisms and joking around. John just assumed the worst and nodded or said nothing until the ranting stopped.

John had some things in common with Manuel, too, including an appreciation for virtue and manners, a love for family, interest in firearms, detestation for criminals and violent communists, and is likewise a victim of injustice, including wrongful imprisonment for exercising self-defense. Manuel tended to be generous as well, although maybe not quite as much as John. And he definitely had a temper and willingness to complain rather than overlook an error. Like many Chileans, he made a big deal when someone accidentally farted in bed or passed gas while sitting on the toilet. John could never quite figure that one out, but then again, Chileans tend to be immature. Manuel recognized human imperfection but was constantly puzzled and frustrated by their relative lack of cleanliness. Although he was always eager to be the first one to get involved in a fistfight, in general, he was a nice guy who could be counted on to do his part. He had his other good points, too. He would shoot every communist, scoundrel, or criminal he could if he had the chance (and if he would not have to go back to jail).

Manuel turned 38 on September 3rd, and Miami kindly brought him a couple of oatmeal crepes before Manuel returned from his near-slave labor gig with the *gendarme* officers, leaving them with John, along with a handwritten happy birthday card. John had sung happy birthday to him (in English) earlier.

Chapter XIII

Five Golden Tumors and Five Golden Rats

Reading alone in the barber room, on one of many typically boring winter days where the cold floor permeated the soles of his Adidas, John watched the tiny, long-tailed mouse scurry from the drainpipe next to the toilet, run along the wall (passing under two door jams), then behind the three trash containers immediately outside before ducking in its hole in front of the male avocado tree. Those mice carry the deadly hantavirus, which is excreted in their urine. John tried in vain to squish it and finally gave up. “We need a cat or a Terrier,” he thought, which of course, were not permitted. His only other interruption came from toothpickman Castro barging in and inquiring about why the bathroom still had standing water in it. “There is no squeegee,” John replied. It had broken somehow. Castro, in true form, ordered, “Get some rags and soak up the shower and toilet water run-off by hand.” John started once again seeing the little, power-abusing chimp for what he was.

Rising from his plastic reading chair, John searched in vain for the squeegee on the *patio* and *en tránsito* areas and then asked Miami (who was always on top of such things) who suggested that he instead soak it up with the wide mop that had just arrived in 118. John did so. His five minutes of slave labor were thus behind him. Besides making helpful suggestions, Miami was also good at explaining the meaning of infrequently used Spanish words. Indeed, he was one of the few *reos* John knew with any post-secondary education at all, even if it was military. At least he read.

Aaron, on the other hand, did not do well in school, preferring instead to work with his hands and earn some money. He was slightly critical of John sitting around reading and preparing to teach, and obviously lower calling than sweeping the floor and often reminded John of his bathroom cleaning duties (especially on days when the dastardly Castro was present). Of course, Aaron still had many opinions about the Bible and theology, even though he did not read the Bible or other books much. Knowledge just came easy for him, further making him despise people who wasted their time studying when they could be cleaning up and doing good works, like caring for filthy older prisoners. John tried in vain to teach him that teaching and serving were both equally valuable functions in the kingdom of God. Perhaps, he thought, he could get Aaron interested in mugging the mouse. There was, however, no immediate response. Maybe tomorrow.

In the meantime, both went back to their boring, silent routines. John figured he at least had one advantage over Aaron: he did not rape or fondle underage girls when he was bored (note: Aaron claimed to be innocent). Then again, he thought if Jesus had forgiven José Aaron, who was he to be so critical of his past propensities? He did keep 118 cleaner, at least. And Aaron said if he got rid of his shotguns, which were “idols” to him that he used to hunt birds and rabbits, he would no longer be tempted to shoot the next man who pissed him off, and thus he would be even more sanctified in the future. What more could John say to that?

The next day was August 28th, exactly one month prior to John’s trial. As usual, by 9:30 a.m., he was well into his routine of walking and stretching (usually prior to roll call), then undertaking his self-study of Italian verbs, prepositions, and common adjectives, plus some common phrases,

before breakfast. He was bound and determined not to waste his time in jail. He figured if he could read a book or two a month and write a couple of books a year, as well as learn some Italian, all of that combined would amount to decent life progress. As an added bonus, he got to teach the Bible to those who were interested, sprinkling in at times as much economics and public policy theory as they could handle, especially Miami, Rubén, and Ismael.

After his morning routines were done, he continued reading about leftist-totalitarian communists and fascists during the Twentieth Century in Paul Johnson's old (but good) book, *Tiempos Modernos* (*Modern Times*). He usually only managed 20 to 35 pages a day since he read a bit slower in Spanish. He also faced frequent interruptions that slowed him down. For instance, Karim walked into the barber room and asked, "Where are your disciples?" John assumed he meant Ismael and Aaron, who regularly attended the evangelical services with him, and replied that he did not know.

Both of them were hard workers, always looking to keep themselves busy with carrying off rubbish, sweeping the grounds, or doing some other cleanup (especially for elderly *reos*). It was hard for Aaron to sit still even for fifteen minutes unless it was over a meal. Ismael was better. He could sit and talk about a Bible or theology topic for up to an hour. He also played chess, a game that quickly taxed Aaron's patience. But both of them gladly worked with their hands. Speaking of hands, John was a little put off (an hour or so later) when Sergio came in to chat. In the course of speaking, he put his hand on Aaron's neck for an extended period, almost like a girlfriend would do. The two were cellmates, along with Carlos, who also popped into the barber room for a couple of minutes and did not seem to be surprised by the hand gesture. John and Ismael were noticeably uncomfortable with what they saw, and John wondered just how the three accused or convicted child molesters carried on in their cell. He was particularly concerned for his "disciple" Aaron, who professed to be following the Christian faith. "Perhaps it is nothing," he thought. He went on to share part of his ham and cheese sandwich and a *frugalé* with Aaron and Ismael, as he often did.

Ismael told Aaron a few Bible stories later on, too, while John listened and added a comment or two. All seemed normal, other than the fact that the tiny mouse was nowhere to be seen. Ortiz was in charge that day, whom John had greeted heartily that morning with a friendly tone, which was reciprocated by Ortiz. Of course, any day without Castro in charge was automatically better than any day with him, even if Aaron had some unresolved issue.

Manuel was acting a bit better, too, and so life was reasonably good for John. His wife, whom he had not seen in nearly five months due to the quarantine, would be resupplying him the next day with *encomienda*. That would be delicious, especially if she brought Papa John's pizza again. However, groceries were already running a little bit in short supply in supermarkets, so she forewarned John that there would be no Doritos this week. John also had to settle for peach juice from the kiosk, instead of orange or pineapple, since the prison *bodega* retailers had told Sergio (who was in charge of buying goods for 118's men every day) that those juices would be out of stock for fifteen days. He turned out to be wrong; it was only three days.

The outside world was starting to fall apart with hunger, lack of work due to the Covid-19 quarantine (slated to end on the 16th), a truckers' strike protesting the central government's failure to protect truckers from violent communists and other scoundrels in the Ninth Region

(which ended on the 2nd), and the controversial upcoming referendum in late October to create a new constitution. There was a lot of uncertainty, to say the least.

John's case was hardly easy, given the leftist judiciary he would face, so he and his wife and friends continued to review case materials to come up with a better defense and perhaps even replace the lawyer. Meanwhile, sympathy with John's unjust suffering grew among Chilean rightists and Evangelicals, who still and more graciously contributed to his support. Life sucked, but it could certainly have been a whole lot worse. John took thirty minutes off from reading in order to walk on the *patio* while singing a dozen hymns in English, with his "disciples" crossing his path a few times while making their cleanup rounds.

As it turned out, the "disciples" had some issues of their own. Aaron attended services but never sang, prayed, or read the Scriptures out loud. Ismael, even worse, without giving a reason, just excused himself and left in the middle of the Sunday service on August 30th. He went to play poker instead and never returned. It was very unusual behavior for him, and John later asked if he was OK. He said, "just fine." But over the coming days, he hardly spoke three words to John and ate breakfast with Aaron alone, across the *patio*. No hint of wanting to come to the Wednesday service, either. John had no idea why Ismael was avoiding him and was not worried about it. He was concerned for Ismael, to whom he had been ministering for so many months. Maybe he felt some conviction for sin in his life from reading (during the service) 2 Timothy 2:15-29, 1 Corinthians 3:1-15, or Matthew 5:45-6:4, about departing from sin, the requirement to have Jesus as Lord and Savior (not just the latter, i.e., the false carnal Christian doctrine), correctly applying biblical teaching to our age, and getting rewards in heaven?

It was hard to say, and Aaron said he did not divulge his problems over breakfast, nor did Aaron inquire. Aaron did not like poker and especially did not like gambling or betting. John had nothing against poker but never played in 118, seeing little personal advantage to wasting his time playing with the local criminals. With Ismael so occupied, and John devouring his books, Aaron had little to do and few to speak with other than the sick or disabled from 118A. Without his books, John would have been bored, too. Manuel never attended services, but he told John in no uncertain terms that it was abnormal and undesirable to have child molesters in the service. John replied, "The Apostle Paul had such people in his services, and I am nothing compared to Paul." Manuel did not like the answer but had no comeback either. At least John now knew why he would not attend services. Mauricio and Ricardo, nominally Mormon and Roman Catholic, respectively, would not attend either, but that was hardly a surprise.

Being a practicing Christian just gave others greater impetus to take potshots at John or his recluse existence, high-mindedness, intellectualism, or whatever else they might conjure up. John and Mauricio exchanged hellos on the stairwell the next day, but Ricardo had not said a word to John since he moved out. Both men were full of opinions, especially Mauricio, who loved to answer a question with a question and treat the other person like he was stupid, but neither man had any education to speak of past high school, other than the nightly news brainwashing routine. Most *reos* were opinionated, but not all were as arrogant as Mauricio, other than Raúl (the elder). Ismael and Aaron were different on that score, somewhat opinionated but not arrogant. But there was still something missing with respect to their Christian walk. At least they did not smoke; neither did Manuel. Mauricio rarely did, and Ricardo only outside the cell.

Speaking of smokers, *Che* had still not returned to 118 by the end of August and was still in 112 at the beginning of September. So was *RoRo*. In the meantime, John continued to buddy up with the *gendarmes*. He figured that relationship was worth preserving. He made friends with Cabo Diego, who had newly come to oversee 118 (and had been there twice). John also started using an empty potato crisps tube as a trashcan by his bed, hoping that Manuel would not catch wind of it. He had scolded John last night for leaving bug-attracting crumbs on the dresser top.

In actuality, John had cleaned the counter off and squished a bug late during the course of the last two nights, and left them for Manuel to find, in order to show him just how ineffective his cleaning had been. That tactic backfired, however, since he just blamed John for the bugs coming out. He also blamed him for leaving crud on the dishwashing sponge. At least he did not yell like Mauricio did, demanding respect for his authority and blaming him (unjustly) for talking too much about how they were getting goods in and out of prison.

Still, on balance, just about everyone found some reason to blame or be mad at the *gringo* for some short period, whether Evangelicals, chess mates, or cellmates. But John just tried to take it all in stride. The days were getting warmer already, and John had little time to waste on such trivialities; he had to get prepared for trial. And the public defender was not helpful on that score. So the issue of changing to a private lawyer came up again. More than a minor distraction, John's rash and spots before his eyes were worsening by the day.

Silva came back on September 4th, and John struck up a friendly conversation with him about his Covid-19 battle, which was remarkably similar to his own. The main differences were that Silva had decent medical care, lung xrays done, a healthy environment to make it through (unlike *módulo* 109), and he lost (and had yet to regain) his sense of smell. He made no mention of changing John to another cell, nor did he inquire about *Che*. Manuel had spoken to Silva earlier about letting John stay put. John was still a little miffed from his discussion the night before. Yet he decided to overlook Manuel's grievous violation of their cellmate's agreement to let him participate in the Historic Baptists Zoom group on Thursday night, led by his dear friend Valentín because Manuel had decided to go to sleep. (Surprisingly, *Rufo* was in attendance once again in the Zoom meeting. John's testimony might have had an effect after all, or maybe *Rufo* was just grateful to Valentín for putting money on his cell phone chip?)

John figured he only had to put up with Manuel's treachery for six more weeks, and so it would be best to just let it slide. It was still irksome since that Zoom meeting, and Sunday's were the only things that John asked for. His criminal trial would be over by late October, and Manuel would likely be out on parole a week or two prior. John would then have the cell to himself, and hopefully, Silva would not move him. John had been purchasing the shelves, equipment, and infrastructure from Manuel in anticipation of living alone in the future.

All was not still or peaceable, however, in 118. There was some movement on the *patio* earlier in the day, with Ismael jumping back and shrieking. "There's a whole family of them," as he pulled back the trash containers and dumped a couple of empty paint buckets filled with water into the holes dug out under the male avocado tree. "By the way," John thought, "someone needs to graft in a female tree branch so the *reos* can get some fruit," which grew yearround in Valparaíso. From his ensconced, seated position in the barber room, John caught a glimpse twice of fairly large gray rats scurrying from the aforementioned tree, running behind the shrubs leading up to

the little Virgin Mary shrine (which besides rosary beads was often replenished by Miami with those fresh cut white flowers featuring that fuzzy orange stick pultruding from the center).

The men had the day before dug up the dirt where the vermin's hole led, finding it to be far more extensive than anticipated. With all the effort, no rats or mice had been caught or killed. Karim did stick a piece of wood in the drain by the toilet (in the room adjacent to where John sat) so that rodents would not be able to run and hide there. Maybe the rodents would be trapped soon after all. John had never lived with mice and rats before. "Come to think of it," he mused, "I have never lived in a situation where I had to wash and reuse plastic bags either," as he stood at the water trough doing just that.

Speaking of unusual tasks, earlier in the day, upon Sergio's urging (in part to make a good impression on Silva), John went up to the *en tránsito* room used for prisoners being freed the next day to sweep the floor and fold the nasty, prison-issued, blue, fire-retardant blankets tossed on the two triple bunks. They were quite different from the nice quilts John's wife brought him and that his friends, like Ricardo, had donated. He made the mistake of flushing the poop-encrusted toilet, and it overflowed, sending poop down the hallway. He then realized that he was not in Kansas anymore. He did not have Clorox or anything to unclog and clean up the vile mess, so he left it and reported the problem to Miami, and also asked for Aaron's help. Nonetheless, the topic never came up again, and John did not ask. The sludge probably just dried before any *paco* saw it. The whole problem was not actually his anyway, or Aaron's.

At least Aaron liked eating the sandwiches John shared with him most every day, along with some *frugalé* gummy candies. Miami said "no" to the sandwich offer, as did Ismael, who claimed he had a stomach ache but still ate a brownie that Aaron had pulled out of his coat pocket. After being locked in his cell, John peacefully enjoyed a pan-fried *quesadilla* for his fare, at least until the newly moved-in *flaites* (white trash, usually criminals) from 105 came back to the cell next door, from their *mozo* semi-slave labor, and cranked up their "music" to an annoying level. It was the same junk that *Rufo* had tortured John with. Everyone in *módulo* 105 must share the same thumb drive with such *regatón* music on it.

The guards inspecting *encomienda* the next day were obnoxious again, especially *Cabo* Marín, who prohibited the entry of BBQ sauce, contrary to what he had done on other occasions. He also issued Pamela an ultimatum or decree that the food was to be a quantity just sufficient to last for one day. "Why does he care anyway?" thought John. Pamela just got miffed. She filled two plastic sacks with food for the week, and she put together one more for Manuel. So the two always got a lot of stuff, to Marín's chagrin. The Uber driver had to deliver Manuel's bag in order to avoid the perperson limit. Upon receipt, hauling the bags from the parking area to the cell, John and Manuel (mainly) divided up all the cooked meat and golden fried potatoes or rice into six sealed plastic containers. One of them was left in the cell to be eaten on Saturday and Sunday, while John brought the others down to the freezer in the dining area, wrapped in a bag with Manuel's name on it. Other *reos* would be less likely to steal from Manuel lest they get hit, something that John was less likely to do.

John then brought one container up per day, starting on Monday. All the rest of the food stayed in the cell unless it had to be refrigerated after opening, like salad dressing. For instance, among regular products the two men received: mayonnaise, BBQ sauce (when allowed, it usually had to

be poured into a bag to ensure it contained no drugs and then into the bottle), potato and corn chips, cereal bars, baked goods (from the store; homemade not allowed), candy-like *frugalé* gummies or taffy bites called “Candy” (in Spanish), loaves of whole-grain bread, lettuce, chopped celery, tomatoes and avocado (peeled and cut), cookies, lunch meats, cheese, garlic powder, homemade salad dressing (disguised in an artificial sweetener bottle), all stayed in the cell. After putting everything away, the trash was taken down, mainly consisting of disposable plastic containers and other residuals.

The conversation regarding food (either when putting it away or cooking it) and personal items in the cell could get a little tense. Manuel was quick to criticize others but did not like to be criticized. When his razor and fingernail clippers fell down from a shelf, he blamed John. He scolded, “Things do not fall by themselves,” as John claimed. But on that day, Manuel stacked the celery and lettuce up high (in their throw-away plastic containers), against John’s objection. While he was heating the sausages and the Chilean version of French bread that Pamela brought, the two containers fell by themselves. John reminded him, “See, things do fall by themselves.” Then Manuel tried remembering something from high school physics (if he actually took the course) to lamely explain the phenomena instead of taking the blame. John was never allowed such luxuries; he was just called a liar, which bothered him greatly. Chileans are master liars and lie and cheat daily, if not hourly. So it is not a big deal for them to call each other liars. John never got accustomed to that culture in his adopted country.

Even if their minds and mouths were not so imbued, the Chilean people were generally clean at least, other than occasional unpleasantness. At least there was no rat or mouse sighting on the *patio* that day, whose existence bothered most of the *reos* in 118. Although there had been no visitors for nearly five months, at least Saturday *encomienda* bags were full of clean and tidy goods, showing the prisoners who got them that they were not forgotten and were still loved. Karim and Aaron almost always got sacks, too. Some *mozos* did. Most others in 118 did not, and often felt forgotten.

The lax attitude about cell phone use helped get through the lack of seeing friends and loved ones. But they still did not make up for not seeing people. And the *pacos* could still take the cell phones. Permission was verbal, and nothing in writing was registered on which to base a theft complaint. Last night was a case in point, exemplifying a close call. The new lieutenant quietly approached and opened the cell door’s slot (ventinal) and saw John using his phone. The interior curtain was left open. John was sure he had closed, but Manuel insisted that he did not. At any rate, the *paco* made it clear that he wanted something for not reporting it or taking it. The next day Manuel took 6,000 pesos (USD8) from John and bought the *paco* Lucky Strikes and a cold drink. The transaction had to be kept secret lest the *paco* be accused of prisoner abuse or to avoid other *pacos* hearing the tale from coming to steal John’s phone or shake him down for treats.

Life in jail was uncertain and sometimes unpleasant and hard. Another thing hard for John was the lack of college-educated and well-traveled people. Other than Bible topics, when John spoke to others besides Miami, they had no knowledge or reference point to understand or contribute to the conversation. Basically, John had no one to talk to about intellectual topics, other than perhaps Miami. Then *mozo* Cristián appeared, maybe ten years younger than John. He had an undergraduate degree in industrial engineering and was very much part of the political Right. He had also been enjoying reading John’s textbook on freemarket economics and policy. He had hit

and killed a drug addict walking across the dark tollway at midnight. Had Cristián, a business owner, not had a few drinks prior, he would have been set free. As it was, he got seven years of prison time and had spent three years split between *módulos* 110, 103, and now 118. He was up for partial (Sunday, then weekend) parole starting next July. John was glad to find someone he could talk to on the weekends (when Cristián did not work), without having to fear his oft-envious conversational counterpart feeling John was arrogant for knowing more than him. Unfortunately, hardly a day goes by in jail without an unpleasant event happening. At least that day, John got some good food and also videoconferenced with the judge in order to get his case file sent to him, even though it turned out to be a lie.

On Sunday, September 6th, it was crystal clear that Ismael had fallen off the bandwagon: no interest in the worship service, and his *patio* talk was all about sports and poker, among otherworldly things. It was like he had abandoned all religious sentiment. Maybe he didn't like Karim saying that he was John's "disciple" and started playing poker with Karim and the others to prove it. Who knows? "Let's pray that the Lord bring him back to us," said Aaron after the brief service that day. John noticed, too, some ostracism. Everyone but him in 118 and 118A was invited to Karim's lunch, held behind closed doors in the dining area, cooked by Miami, and promoted by Moroni. Maybe they knew John did not eat much, especially *rancho* or its recooked derivatives, or maybe they detested him for his religious principles, for formally accusing *Che*, or harboring some envy. Hard to say.

John had to leave the barber room early since Silva said he was going to have it painted, and soon thereafter, Manuel appeared and said he needed the room to cut drugtrafficker Moroni's hair (with Silva's permission). Manuel picked some strange friends. Manuel got invited to lunch. Moroni and John had not spoken a word to each other since the day Moroni threatened to stab him. Moroni also invited Aaron, who declined and went off to help Delfín (83) get to the doctor. Moroni probably knew, too, that John did not want to eat lunch with him.

Hence, while John was all alone on the *patio*, Luis (age 30) appeared, recently imprisoned and transferred from 108, where all new accused arrive and stay for the now customary fourteen-day quarantine. He showed John his blood-striped arms, sliced twenty-four times by his cellmates the night before, and once more in the knee, a service rendered to him since he had been accused of raping his younger sister (and was jailed for being a danger to society). He told John he was innocent and lamented that his family had been threatened and that money had been extorted from them due to the allegations. He added that he was a Pentecostal (a believer but not a member), as was his family. John invited him to the Wednesday and Sunday Evangelical services. Luis also said that he would have dissuasively shot at the criminals in Reñaca, just like John had. Silva sent him to bunk with Karim (although the next day, he would move into the *en tránsito* cells across the *patio* to finish his quarantine period).

That afternoon, during the Zoomcast of the Historic Baptists meeting, Manuel got to listen in with John, and at the end of the meeting, Valentín witnessed to him and answered his questions. Manuel liked what he heard. Baptists seemed much more serious and pensive than the ignorant and fake-emotional Pentecostal preachers who showed up on the *patio* at times. For two hours, John actually felt like he was not in prison, just normal life. The following day was more of the same except that he got an unexpected video conference call from his attorney, the public defender, which was useful and encouraging. A supporter from the Right was going to send a

private attorney to see John on the 11th (the day Chile was liberated from communist rule in 1973) in order to consider a last-minute lawyer change.

September 10th brought some change and stress. One change is that Ismael started talking more to John, although not about religious matters. Chilean independence day was coming on the 18th, and the *reos* in 118 each got to bring in two kilos of raw grilling meat through *encomienda* on Saturday the 19th. Once the grilling started, everyone would share, especially with those who had no visitors or *encomienda*. However, Ismael's family lived in Santiago, and thus he wanted John's wife to buy his meat and deliver it to the guards on the 19th. His family would send her the money rather than making a four- or five-hour round trip, costing more than the meat in fuel and toll, just to drop off a bag. So the *escritos* were done for John, Aaron, and Ismael, and plans to get Ismael's meat were made.

Another surprise was Karim being moved to maximum security *módulo* 107. He had a court hearing on the 9th to prepare for trial but could not attend since he was in quarantine for two weeks. Silva had made the mistake of sending Luis to bunk with him the night before the hearing when he should have been in isolation for a possible Covid-19 infection. Karim's lawyers decided to lodge a formal complaint in court for persecution by the *gendarmes*. Karim had had several run-ins with Silva over the previous few months, and Silva had had him change cells three times. He also entered his cell in 118 the day before (while Karim was downstairs talking to his lawyer) and swiped his cell phone, adding to Karim's anger. He had told John earlier that he thought Silva had mental problems. There was bad blood between them, and the *gendarme* officials retaliated against the court complaint by sending Karim to 107, where he had no frills, no television, no cell phone, far fewer cell amenities, 24-hour camera surveillance of his doings, and only one hour per day (sometimes 90 minutes) of *patio* time. Of course, the lawyers would use that move as further evidence of persecution, and the war was on. John was surprised to hear of it and was glad that he had struck up such a good relationship with Silva, who happily greeted him each morning and wished him a good night when he locked him in every afternoon.

But things were not always rosy in the cell. It is hard for anyone to live under the microscope of an obsessivecompulsive cellmate, and Manuel had had it with John the morning of the 10th, at one point threatening to have Silva move him to another cell. He had found a few tiny flecks of poop in the toilet bowl. John had not checked carefully after using it since Manuel had been pushing John to get moving so he could get in there himself. And there had been two other similar poop instances since John had moved in. In reality, John was always under scrutiny and had to worry every minute whether he had left trash out or in the wrong place, whether there was a little water on the floor after showering or dishwashing, whether there were crumbs on the cabinet, whether his designated dirty underwear pile was too close to the light switch, whether the plastic food containers were too close to the shower bucket, whether there was a speck of burnt cheese found on the *micrón* or the frying pan after washing. That is just to name a few things. Manuel's wrath surprisingly brought tears to John's eyes since he had come to think of Manuel as a friend and because he went to such lengths to shame and humiliate him.

All John could do was to say he was sorry and ask for forgiveness, which Manuel eventually did. Perhaps he started thinking the benefits he stood to lose by booting John out still exceeded the costs, or that it really was rude to treat a man old enough to be his father that way, and whose religious principles and practice he had come to admire. After all, John did make significant

contributions to the cell. He bought 95% of all food, drinks, paper towels, toilet paper, and cleaning supplies, paid one-half of all repair work and 100% of any shelving or other needs he himself had, did almost all the dishwashing and some of the cooking, took out the trash daily, brought up both men's laundry, and also lent Manuel his backup cell phone for unlimited use. "All that must be worth something," John mused.

Plus, when Manuel left out trash or a mess, John just cleaned it up without saying a word. If Manuel farted, John never said a word, whistled, or made a big deal about it, unlike Manuel, who reminded John of what life was like being in the 4th grade. The two men, John realized long ago, lived in a large bathroom, and human physiology might be controlled, but gas expulsion was simply unavoidable and hardly worth shaming a cellmate over. No one liked the stress of living under a microscope. John was just glad his court trial was coming up in eighteen days, and shortly afterward, he might get to finally go home. John was happy, too, that his rash had diminished somewhat, although his shoulder still hurt.

He spent some time getting points by completing a few English assignments for the daughter of a *gendarme* officer, Major Toledo, an activity which he was prohibited from talking about lest the officer be accused of prisoner abuse. John complied, since he needed the brownie points in prison, even if it turned out that he was helping the kid cheat in school, to make sure he stayed in 118 and was treated relatively well. He looked at it as a sort of bribe, commonly rendered in such corrupt systems. He had absolutely nothing against Major Toledo, who always treated him well. The relative certainty allowed him to more easily work on his case preparation. He was also relieved on September 11th (the 47th anniversary of Chile's freedom from the communist rule) that Fernando García Ladrón de Guevara, the private rightist lawyer who visited him, thought it best to stay with the public defender. The new lawyer himself would come on board as an auxiliary attorney and even interrogate witnesses during the trial, along with keeping an eye on the public defender so that he would not cut some vile deal with the leftist district attorney and screw John over in the process. John was happy to hear it and hoped all would work out as planned (but did not since Guillermo said such an alliance was not permitted). In the meantime, his wife continued to find discrepancies in the prosecution's arguments and evidence.

Chapter XIV

The Wages of Sin

By the evening of the 12th, John had had about all that he could take of Manuel's frequent criticism and was again thinking about requesting a cell change. The logical move was to hang in there for a few more weeks until Manuel got paroled (or John's trial concluded), but the constant walking on eggshells or pins and needles was getting hard to take. Today, Manuel complained that John was looking over his shoulder while he divided up the weekly supply of meat and potatoes from John's wife into plastic containers for the freezer. Then, after a nap, coming on the heels of eating a pizza that John and Pamela paid for and for which John had cleaned up the dishes (Manuel reheated the slices in a little oven rented from Aníbal that John paid for), John pulled out his cell phone from its hiding place, called a *caleta*, before the cell door was bolted.

It was a simple mistake, and it was late (5 p.m.) where the door was usually locked by 3:30 p.m. at the latest. Sergio barged in through the closed but unlatched door to return the television borrowed from Manuel and saw John with the phone in hand: "No, no! Not while the door is open! There is still a lieutenant around." John knew he was right and felt bad about the accidental error, but felt far worse about the coming storm. "I should have deduced from the absence of the television that the door was not yet bolted." Doing so was not easy for John, who largely ignored the television and had not had one in his own home for 36 years. Once Sergio left, Manuel jumped all over him, and John had had enough. "I do not want to be criticized right now." Manuel acted like he was going to be harmed by what John had done, even though John owned the only two phones in the cell. He replied that he did not know the door was still open, but that just further enraged self-righteous Manuel, who, in his mind, never made a mistake. For John, it was hard to live under such constant scrutiny. People make mistakes and regret them. John had never yet made such a blunder with his phone in all his time in jail, but he realized that it was possible and likely there would be other blunders in the future.

No one is perfect, not even Manuel. But being often reminded of one's errors really wore one down. So he just rolled over and let Manuel yell while making some defensive retorts, while the "flashlights" came back into his ailing eyes. He realized that the stress was getting to him and was not good for his health. Living with Manuel would make anyone think about committing suicide at least monthly. Like with Mauricio, it was clear that no one could stand to live with Manuel longer than six or eight months.

Sergio's rebuke was the proper course, even helpful, and John was not worried that Sergio knew he had a phone. They had been cellmates before, and he was not a rat. But Manuel's constant biting criticism and lack of appreciation was hard to deal with for so many hours of confinement together. Manuel had never learned that there are better ways to handle difficult situations or social problems. "It makes no difference who you are here, not pastor, not anything." While what Manuel said was true, frequently humiliating and shaming John was counterproductive and unnecessary. John might never adjust to prison life, and he certainly did not want to put anyone else in danger. So he had to reevaluate his situation, and if he could not find a way to bear with Manuel for a few more weeks, then he should look for an alternative. Karim was gone, and his cell was empty. Maybe John could go to a cell by himself?

Diego (the right-wing industrial engineer, seen occasionally, on the *patio* on Sundays) was set at liberty a week earlier, and his cellmate Cristián was kicked out the day before when the *gendarmes* raided their cell and found a modem. He went to 103 to be a “Gentile.” So much for John’s hope for a little intellectual conversation! His other cellmate was booted to 103 the next day after the special *gendarme* cell-raiding team found his cell phone at the same time they found the modem. Yet another “Gentile” gone to the evangelical *módulo*. John was surprised that that guy did not get booted with Cristián. Indeed, that morning John had spoken to him and learned the news about Cristián, thus making arrangements to get his book back that he had lent to rightists Diego and Christian, who had been reading it. “Why did they not boot you, too?” He replied that cell phones were allowed, and thus no punishment was due. Apparently, he was mistaken. So that cell was also empty at that moment.

There was excitement outside of the cells earlier on the *patio*, too. Ismael, Manuel, Aníbal, and Carlos had ganged up on the valiant rat and mouse clans with buckets of water and a broom. The rodents made their last stand near the Virgin Mary shrine. In the end, two tiny mice perished, and the men vaunted their victory.

And the whole rancorous operation only subsided when the brutal sound of all-out war was heard in *módulo* 114’s *patio* about six feet above 118’s and behind a tall fence. Seventeen men with homemade spears and knives faced off against seventeen others similarly armed. The shrieks, yelling, and clanging of metal was impressive. Everyone, including Cabo Ortiz, stopped to look up toward the fence and listen. (John could not make out the words but others said it was nasty and odious.) The battle went on for perhaps ten minutes, and when the *pacos* finally broke it up and hauled the combatants off in chains, one *machucado* was dead and many others wounded. “Just another day in terrestrial hell,” John mused, thankful that he was not living in a worse part of the prison. Nevertheless, it still remained to be seen if he might be better off moving to another cell. Living under a critical microscope without any appreciation is hard for any human being to take and remain healthy.

Insofar as Manuel was concerned, there were still sins that John had to reckon with. Whisker stubble was left in the sink and not rinsed away immediately (instead of five minutes later), water drops were left on the floor after washing the dishes, plastic chairs used for over a month were all of a sudden too space-consuming and hence had to be stored in the dining room downstairs (making life less comfortable and dinner together unlikely), some tiny crumbs were brushed onto the floor from the countertop instead of John’s hand, the trash bag was not immediately taken off the wall and placed on the fire extinguisher cabinet outside (once the cell door was unlocked the next morning), and the blanket covering the window to prevent cold from coming in was not hung adequately. These tragic events formed the basis for a few more of the next day’s complaints. Instead of being spread out along the top of the shelf, John’s food was now shoved over and piled onto his “half.”

Moreover, Manuel had taken down the drawstring black privacy “curtain” that he had installed and left up so that John could enclose his bed space. He put it up across his bed instead. He no longer said “good morning” to John either when John greeted him, nor did he say “goodbye” with a hearty fist-bump when he left to do his semi-slave labor (paid 57,000 pesos per month) with the *gendarme* officers, as he had done for weeks. Manuel now refused to eat the food Pamela sent, too, other than what he “bought.” John offered it to him anyway. When he refused one of the two

sausages on bread with mustard, avocado, and tomato, John ate both, fearing it would spoil if left out for a second day. "Go ahead, eat all the food you brought yourself without sharing," was Manuel's snide comment. He had apparently forgotten that John offered the sausages to him both yesterday and today, and Manuel had eaten half of the pizza Pamela and John bought.

John's generosity policy did not grant Manuel a property right in 50% of the food brought in through Pamela. John reserved the right to eat as much of it as he liked. Why not? It was to do with as he wished. How did Manuel come away with the idea that he was somehow entitled? It was typical communist thinking that even affected people on the political right like Manuel. No one was more generous with his cellmates than John. But, like it was for Mauricio, for Manuel, there was something insidious about receiving unconditional gifts from one's cellmate, as if some pride led them to avoid becoming obliged in some way in the future.

Manuel was, it seemed, just looking for a reason to detest John more and boot him out of the cell. He burped and farted inordinately, as if to try to bother John, also had the television blaring, as he sang along very loudly and swept up violently, making a ruckus. John was hardly comfortable with his cellmate's rude and childish behavior. But he only had to put up with it for a few weeks more. The next day Manuel informed John that he was not to use his yellowhandled (sharp) knife and fork. The only complaint afterward was about a few drops of water on the floor after John's dishwashing, followed by a snarling dismissal of John's "Sorry, I will do better next time." John had gotten up to make a meat and cheese quesadilla leading up to the incident, "Manuel, would you like to eat?" The answer was, "No, thank you."

Then some guy arrived and passed Manuel pork chops through the cell door portal by hand onto a waiting plate. Obviously, this exchange had been arranged beforehand. "Are we eating separately now?" John asked. Manuel said, "No," then muttered something else unintelligible to John. "Are we friends?" He replied, "Yes." Do you want me to change cells?" To that question, he replied, "The cell is not mine but rather pertains to the *gendarmes*. If you request a cell change, they will ask why. And, no, I do not want you to change cells." John thought his reply was disingenuous, but maybe he was just caught off-guard by *gringo* directness. There was obviously something wrong, as evidenced by his change in behavior. But John figured the wisest course was to try to stay put through his trial and just make the best of his living soap opera, the previews of which provided no end of fascination and entertainment to his friends and family reading advance copy outside of John's living hell.

Meanwhile, things outside the cell were still tense and anxiety-generating. Besides all the talk about another tiny mouse being found dead near the Virgin, perhaps finally succumbing to his injuries from the earlier battle, John had lured Ismael into eating half of one of the turkey, cheese, mayonnaise, avocado, and lettuce sandwiches, plus chips, cookies, and a few gummy candies later, along with Aaron, his usual guest. The sandwiches were delicious and a welcome relief from *rancho*. Ismael was unusually talkative, too, warning John that Silva was on a rampage upstairs (on John's floor), raiding cells and confiscating cell phones. John was obviously concerned, especially with all the trouble with his obsessive-compulsive cellmate. Who knows what he might say or do? Sergio came in to take kiosk orders, and John took advantage to confirm Ismael's report and to ask if any phones had been found and taken. "Yes, three," was the reply. Obviously, Silva's policy was far different from González's, perhaps exacerbated by what Karim did to embarrass the *gendarmes*.

John took the opportunity an hour later to re-invite Ismael to come to the evangelical services, noting that another voice was needed, so he did not have to sing solo. There was no commitment. Rubén also took the initiative to strike up a long, personal conversation with John as he walked back and forth on the *patio*, marking a positive change in his disposition toward John after a couple of months of near-divorce. The *reos* were sent to their cells late that afternoon, and John was relieved to find his cell phone in its *caleta* unmolested. He started reading Rummel's, *Death by Government* and then was just about asleep when Manuel barged in inconsiderately and loudly, turning on the lights and kicking off the aforementioned events. By 9:20, Manuel was singing at the top of his lungs in his bunk below John's, which he had never done before. John ignored him and continued to write. At least the multitudinous spots before his eyes were not as noticeable or annoying inside as they were when reading earlier in broad daylight downstairs. He also noticed that Carlos had been by (as promised) to wrap his bedposts with tape so the jagged remnants of the sawed-off crossbar would no longer rip up his quilts. Something positive at least, even if paid for. John threw in a few *frugalé*, too, the next day. He also gave some to the alwaysdelighted Miami, Ismael, and Aaron.

Manuel was still not eating with John on September 15th, and in the morning left without saying "goodbye." He also did not heat John's shower water, for the first time, obligating John to take more time to get ready and thus complicating both to be ready on time. It was not hard to fill the electric tea kettle and turn it on. He did not do so out of spite. It had to be filled and heated twice and then mixed with cold water. That is what took time, but it was only a little bother while one was getting dressed. But he did say "hello" in the evening when he returned and spoke to John about Karim's bad situation in 107 without television or cell phone. His family was worried sick about him and had just called his former cellmate, Manuel, for some consolation.

The truth of the matter is that Karim was often pushing the limits of the prison rules, demanding rights that did not exist, like using the barbeque grill for one's birthday, being habitually late for roll call, and letting his beard grow. He also publicly discredited the *gendarmes*. In some sense, he brought his misery upon himself. The rules for prisoners were fairly clear: no fighting, keep one's hair short with no beards permitted, arrive on time to the lineup for roll call (counting off, except for Silva, who went cell-by-cell each morning and took roll instead of doing the lineup), make your bed in the morning, help out with clean-up (technically not required of accused men but frowned upon if not done), and go back to the cell when told, which in *coa* is known as *era* (some *pacos* like González yell out *vamoli* to let the *reos* know it is *era*).

At lineup, no shorts, caps, beanies, flip-flops, or tank tops were allowed, but as soon as everyone counted off and the *paco* said *buenos días*, one could change clothes and use any of those things. Special privileges were granted after approval of written request: conjugal visits, a television, a radio, plastic chairs, quilts, etc. Not permitted were cell phones, computers, typewriters, and similar electronic devices. Cell phones are nonetheless commonplace, and the rule was often relaxed during the Covid-19 crisis. Other things are not allowed but are never taken away: a *micrón*, an electric grill, wristwatches, glass plates, sharp dinner knives, light fixtures, small ovens, oregano, garlic powder, peanut butter, electric razors, electric heaters, electric tea kettles, buckets, and some other items. However, the *gendarmes* never complain about them or take them or even ask how the *reo* got them. Karim had acquired many such things but now had to leave it all in 118, where they were likely lost.

Another prohibited item was a flyswatter or electrically charged kill racket to burn flies and bugs. John found, however, that a flattened 3-liter 7up bottle provided about 15% effectiveness in smashing flies in the barber room or at least knocking them to the ground where they, stunned, were easy prey to stomp on. Over the last four days, John had scored 34 kills! The long-tailed mouse living in a hole bored in the drywall of the bathroom was, however, simply too fast. It boldly and defiantly appeared three times that day and ran back into the hole when John flinched, never having a chance to move his shoo-in for the kill. Silva had painted his office bars and cleared off the plexiglass so he could observe everyone on the *patio*. However, he could not see John in the barber room, nor imagine the combat he was undertaking.

Speaking of conflict, back in the cell, John was trying to keep his obsessive-compulsive cellmate from blowing his top, being extra careful to do things the way he wanted. Rubén had also lived with Manuel and had had to learn to live with him and his illness. He gave John some pointers.

In the morning, while John was bathing, Manuel had slammed shut the cupboard door and chided him for leaving food scraps unflushed. If he had just waited seven minutes, all would be closed and flushed. John was not finished getting ready. But Manuel was so focused on cleaning up that he could not imagine waiting more than three seconds before taking those actions. He really had it bad. At night he argued with his mother about his way of thinking versus John's, justifying himself and not listening to her as she defended John. When John grunted or exhaled too loud as he struggled to climb up into bed or did anything else requiring effort leading to a noticeable exhale, Manuel mocked him. When John ran out of bread, and Manuel said he had some leftovers, John saw it on the shelf and, knowing it was two weeks old, thus asked if it wasn't stale and moldy.

It was a reasonable question, but Manuel was offended and said, "How can you think that I would offer you something stale and moldy?" He could not comprehend that it had nothing to do with his intentions but the simple fact that bread goes bad after a while. Feeling obliged, John got up and took out two slices. He saw no mold and then proceeded to sniff them, which set Manuel off again, "That's low class! How can you sniff bread and then consider putting it back?" John said he saw no problem with doing so. Sniffing had no effect on the bread. Manuel said his idea of low class differed. John used the slices to make his sandwich and was done with it. In the cell, if it was not one thing, it was another. John was under the microscope and working hard to perfect his behavior in the eyes of his ill cellmate. Only thirteen days till his trial began, he recalled, and maybe only three until Manuel left on parole. Reading for four hours about the horrors of twentieth-century communists and fascists (who murdered over 300 million non-combatants) in Rummel's *Death by Government*, did not serve to brighten John's day, and the flies, mouse, cell raids, and Manuel did little to improve his frame of mind.

Besides all that, John's wife was sick with severe uterine pain from myomas or maybe cancer but, being stubborn and rebellious, she had so far refused to see the doctor, despite the fact that Christian friends had paid up the substantial arrearage on her medical coverage, leaving her with no excuse. She was such a blessing but could be such a burden, too. Is it any wonder that John had a lot of stress? John reminded himself he acted about the same way toward Jesus as Pamela did to him. She was a good reminder of how duplicitous and rotten he could be.

Just before hitting the sack, Manuel brushed his teeth, then chided John when he found two

specks of cheese and meat in the sink, residue from the dishes John washed. John didn't bother trying to deny or explain. Instead, he pointed out that the rest of his cleaning was much better, like no water on the floor or food specks in the toilet. "See, I am improving." Manuel just grunted and then talked about what a good idea it had been for him to put another curtain across the portal. The night *gendarme* had just been sneaking outside spying on them. He was right. As usual, never a dull moment in "paradise," or "the beach," as they called 118.

John had to wonder, with all his activities in 118, just how well was he putting his Ph.D. to work? Reading and case preparation was one thing, but combating flies, mice, and Manuel was another! Worse yet, someone threw out the flattened 7up bottle, and John had to put up with lots of unwelcome visitors the next day while reading inside. Good thing it was warm and sunny enough to read outdoors, even if the spots before his eyes were more visible. Back in the cell that afternoon, Manuel seemed to be a new man, and John started to wonder if he was also bipolar. He brought eggs, and after a while started cooking the food allocation from Pamela, and talking about the guard sneaking in sausages tomorrow for them (for Chilean independence day celebrations the day after), that ice cream was available at the kiosk, and he would get some (John paying), and he wanted to know if Pamela had already gone to the store this week for *encomienda*. He also talked to John about his new add-on lawyer, who got robbed and could not come to see him today since he now had no identification.

Moreover, Manuel cozily climbed up into John's bunk (which had the window), like they had been friends since first grade after John alerted him that *gendarmes* were out on the *patio*. "That's Colonel Hibara, whom I work for, along with the comandante (second in charge), major Toledo, and some inspector from Santiago. The top brass is usually not here. Something is going down in 118. I hear that they are booting people out." All John could do was speculate about what Manuel said and hope his position in 118 was secure. Meanwhile, a lieutenant took a new *reo* up to an *en tránsito* cell. Maybe it was someone famous? Something was attracting lots of attention, like the juice in John's cup that lured in the fly that he subsequently trapped and killed after dinner. At least John was relieved that the tension level in the cell had decreased. Maybe Manuel would even go back to heating the shower water? John finished washing and drying the dishes and got under the covers to do some work on his case and talk to his wife. Another day was coming to a close.

The next day, Manuel did not heat John's shower water and had gotten up late himself. So there was once again a problem with time to get ready. Normally, each cellmate gets about a half-hour to get ready, and no one else gets out of his bunk while he is doing so, other than perhaps to take care of an urgent bathroom necessity. But Manuel could not sit still for more than five minutes and was always up and about cleaning or tidying things, getting in the way. It was selfish behavior that never dawned on him. But he redeemed himself this day by arranging with a corrupt *paco* to bring in *longaniza* (long grilling sausage, at triple the store price), fried meat *empanadas* (turnovers), *marraqueta* (similar to French) bread, Savory blackberry, and cream ice cream, and rented the little oven again. John only paid half of the food cost, too. He had a stomach ache after downing a half-liter of ice cream (no freezer in the cell to keep it hard) but was delighted by the change in menu for the next two days.

He really appreciated what Pamela cooked for him, but it was basically the same thing week in, week out for ten months. It got old, other than when she brought a pizza. Otherwise, the day was

pretty uneventful for John. He finished *Death by Government* and picked up *The Black Book of Communism*, he shared his sandwich with Aaron, and he video conferenced with Magistrate (Judge) Miguel, trying once again to get a copy of his case file sent to him, which was promised by Magistrate Rodrigo twelve days ago but never arrived.

In Chile, a defendant's life is placed in the hands of his lawyer or public defender, and he usually becomes passive in legal matters. John did get his lawyers to agree to receive a list of questions from him to possibly be asked to witnesses. His son David helped put them into a spreadsheet and emailed them off. The public defender was not going to allow either John or his wife to testify unless absolutely necessary (and then only at the end, depending on how the trial went). Pretty much, his fate was in the hands of a political centrist whom he had only met once in person and only a few times afterward via video conference call on Zoom.

But the private lawyer from the Right, Fernando García (who was, interestingly, a Chilean-Italian dual citizen), who came to visit him, later wrote to assure him that the public defender, Guillermo, was not a communist, was a good trial lawyer, and would fight like hell for him. He had made some inquiries with a couple of prosecutors and lawyers who knew Guillermo. By the evening of the 17th, the long holiday weekend had started. On Monday, Guillermo would be at a hearing to nail down that the trial would be inperson instead of via videoconference, starting one week later. Judge Miguel said the trial was open to the public. Normally, his wife and friends could attend, but with the Covid19 quarantine, he could not be certain. John expected every TV and some radio news channels to be there, just like when he was arraigned. It was an anxious time, but John was resting in God's Providence. At least his wife had scheduled a doctor visit.

One of the worst, most insidious parts of being in jail was that no one cared, besides the friends and family outside who had no easy way to help and were often worried sick. No one who was inside the barbed wire fence, dotted with ten rifle-bearing, turreted guard posts could care less if a *reo* is sick, needs a medical checkup to prevent illness or serious diseases, or if he eats or bathes. No one cares what kind of clothes a *reo* has or if he is warm. No one cares if a *machucado* gets stabbed or threatened, much less if he feels sad or misses the people he loves and cares for, which is especially prevalent on holidays like the 18th of September. They do not even care if one dies, other than perhaps the *gendarme* administration, which stands to lose 760,000 pesos (1,050 USD) per month in future gross revenues. For repeat offenders, which nearly all *machucados* are, the prosecution and defense teams, plus expert witnesses, will likewise no longer get paid their extra fees for "closing a case file" after the convict is freed and subsequently caught again for committing another crime.

Experts earn about 300,000 pesos per report they generate (on average), and some do as many as 900 per year, in addition to getting another 200,000 pesos per court appearance (if required). Those experts who do more timeconsuming reports do fewer per year but charge more, sometimes several million pesos a pop. If an inmate dies from illness, fighting, or is murdered, these state parasites or appendices lose money; otherwise, almost no one else cares. The general public that has no connection to a prisoner could care less about them, other than complaining about the high costs and taxes to keep them alive, which is much more than the 500,000 pesos per month the average blue-collar Chilean earns. If all prisons burned down tomorrow and all inmates died, it would be fine and well insofar as most of the general public is concerned. After

all, everyone in jail *must* be guilty of something, and society would be better off without them anyway; some even deserve to die. That naivety seems to mark the prevalent thinking in Chile. People seem to ignore the fact that the penitentiary also holds some innocent people suffering unjustly.

Inside, all the prisoners call each other “brother” (*hermano*) as if the whole place is some sort of a perverse fraternity where people love each other. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Terms like that cause confusion. Hence, the Evangelicals have to call other serious, committed Christians “servant” since the term *brother* has been hijacked. One also hears the term *aponaso*, which means criminal or *choro*. And *aponaso de lampa* means someone who has been a criminal since childhood, like *Rufo* or Arturo, a self-proclaimed *vivo* who just transferred into 118.

Arturo was a thief since age 12, now age 39, and struck up a conversation with John in the barber room on holiday. John had learned to be wary of the advances of such *reos*, figuring he was a scammer like *RoRo*. Arturo was due to be paroled in three months and hoped to start a café with ocean view in Valparaíso for tourists, and thus never return to prison. He wanted to tell John his stories about prison for his book, like all the fighting and killing he had seen, or that nearly everyone in the other *módulos* he had been housed in for the last three years (114, 115, 104, 101, and to a lesser extent 113) were drug addicts. Many *gendarmes* were corrupt drug suppliers, but some, like Silva, were straight shooters, he said, who would turn in confiscated drugs to the judicial authorities. He also had lots of interesting ideas about trapping flies by using the bottoms of Coke bottles filled with oil and bread to get them stuck in and die gruesome deaths, or bags full of water hung from the fluorescent tubes in order to create reflections that scare them away. Imagine all the nifty tricks one learns in prison!

John invited him to install both devices, which he said he would do during the coming week when he was not working as a *mozo*. He slaved away in the same office as Manuel (who later told John that Arturo was a *huevo* or *wiwi* rather than a *vivo*). In the meantime, John had gotten another 3-liter 7up bottle, flattened it, and Arturo was impressed by John’s skill at killing flies off one by one. After Arturo was gone, John glanced up from his book to see a sparrow hop into the room and gobble up all the dead flies John had left on the floor. Thus, he had made a new animal friend, along with learning something new about sparrows. One observes lots of new things when he is bored or sitting in the same place for hours on end. Arturo also taught him another *coa* term: *dequerosa*, meaning careful, just like John was learning to be. So it was a day full of learning about fly killing and sparrow diets, in addition to what he was reading about the evils of Lenin and Stalin in the *Black Book of Communism*.

The whole prison had an air of communism about it, too, in the way people, more like animals, were fed and given scant medical care. The *gendarmes* and people in the judicial power get paid regardless of the physical condition of the despicable *reo*, just like profit-maximizing cattle raisers. The holiday would not have been noticeably different had the *gendarmes* not thrown in an *empanada* and chunk of butter in the morning grub. Manuel also garnered a few more of these turnovers, which they heated on the *micrón* later in the cell. Soon the day would pass. Tomorrow *encomienda* would arrive, Sunday would feature a barbeque with loads of meat, and perhaps a little church service.

Lawyer Fernando said he would try to come on Monday, in the midst of the second day of grilling. In between times, John hoped to knock out another 50 to 100 pages per day in his book. Fairly exciting times, and before he knew it, his trial would begin, and Manuel would be processed for parole. He had had good write-ups, unlike Ricardo, who just got canned as *mozo* at the penitentiary infirmary for inordinately taking the hand of a female paramedic, making a pass at her, a girl who ended up being some *gendarme*'s girlfriend. Now he had to start his service score over, setting his parole back at least six months. Like they say, "You can't fix stupid."

Rubén brought John his breakfast on the 19th, as he often did, which consisted of four round pieces of white bread and a little bottle (591ml) of Sprite. *Manjar* (sweetened, condensed milk) was also available, but Rubén left it with Aaron and Ismael, knowing that John would not eat it. "With this sort of diet, it's a wonder that *reos* stay healthy or in shape at all," thought John as he pulled a cube of butter he bought from the kiosk (via Sergio) out of his backpack. And many *machucados* were, in fact, thin and in poor health, although that might be due to drug abuse mainly, then again the food quality did not help matters.

Prison nutrition had apparently developed John into a real killer, too. He wasted many flies every day, much to his sparrow friend's delight, and as of this day, he was officially designated as a rat assassin. Silva had rounded up the men and asked them to throw out the tin, wood, and other pieces of rubbish still in the hollowed-out *bodega*. John was doing his twenty walking laps on the *patio* when he saw Ismael jump back, shrieking. "It must be a rat," John figured. The large rodent, maybe nine inches long plus tail, bolted for the hole next to the male avocado tree. Ismael filled up a five-gallon bucket of water while nearly all the other men gathered around to witness the spectacle. The nest was so deep that it took three buckets to fill it enough so that the ugly vermin had to get out or drown.

It ran back behind a chunk of sheet metal in the *bodega* and hid. Then, a team of *reos* led by Ismael pursued it and started pulling out the junk piece by piece while the others gathered behind on the *patio*. John finished his exercise and stretching and, noticing the flank was left wide open for the rat to escape, took up a preventive position like a football free safety. Sure enough, the scared critter chose the path of least resistance and ran right at him. John caught its long tail with one shoe and broke its hip and back leg with the other. The wounded rat managed to scurry as best it could on its two or three remaining good legs and made it to the center of the *patio*, where it rolled onto its side. Ricardo, still miffed about his failed romantic adventure with the paramedic girl, clobbered it with a yard broom, swept it into the dustpan, and flung it into a trash can. John was hailed a master killer by the onlookers, who straightway went back to their boring routines while recounting the day's excitement with others.

John went back to his Italian dictionary and to reading his book about bloodthirsty communists until *encomienda* arrived. The pizza and fresh salad veggies were welcome and made for good eating that afternoon and evening in the cell. Manuel, who apparently was in his mania phase, was happy as he could be with John as they ate. They talked about the rat killed today, the many mice, the flies, and just how filthy the jail was. *Reos* could not be counted on to wash their hands, and many often touched the food of others with those bare hands.

Chapter XV

If I Make My Bed in Hell

The *empanada* John had for breakfast and/or lunch yesterday was case in point, delivering gas, intestinal leaking, and stomach pain, pretty disgusting. Just about anything coming from the communist trough in 118 did that to him, making both cellmates miserable. Once again, John vowed not to eat prison food, and Manuel got the point. John's immune system simply could not handle it. His eyes were no better, and his skin still itched; few cared. Manuel often mistakenly thought John was eating something in bed and inquired as to what it might be when in reality, John's scratching was just loud!

The big barbeque on the 20th in 118 was a hit, with lots of meats (far more than what was needed), *pebre* (chopped onion, tomato, garlic, parsley, and a little *ají* (medium-hot pepper sauce), *empanadas*, *choripan* (sausages on rolls), potato salad, veggies, and soda pop. John, wary of becoming ill again, ate nothing that did not directly touch a flame, i.e., medium-rare beef sirloin that Pamela brought and sausage, although he did eat some *pebre*, bread, plus Pepsi and lemon soda. So much raw meat and fixings were left over that a repeat barbeque was set for the next day. Everyone sat together and talked, rather than being divided into factions like they were at New Year's. It was nice, although the *flaites* (low-class) *reos* were impossibly hard to comprehend. John's lawyer Fernando came, and when John got back, lunch had already started. No room was left next to Manuel, so he took his place next to Ismael, Rubén, Aaron, Mauricio, and Pato. He still could not participate as much as he liked since the bass-beat-loving Latin music was blaring so loud that he could not make out everything people were saying.

The rats and mice must have been bothered by it as well since none appeared. Or maybe they were just scared of vermin killers John and Ricardo. Moreover, John and Aaron decided to postpone or cancel the evangelical worship service on account of the noise and so many people wandering around. But at least the food was good. Everyone was happy, except apparently, Karim, who (according to Mauricio) was just booted out of 107 into punishment *módulo* 112 (where *Che* was still) for talking on his cell phone. (Later that evening, Manuel called a well-connected *reo* he knew who said that he had been moved back to 107, probably true, but it was hard to know for certain.) Karim made no bones about breaking the rules. He was the only one brazen enough to use his cell phone in 118's *patio*, too. John, who complied with nearly every rule (other than perhaps cell phone use) was doing just the opposite.

John had made some points earlier in the day with the *gendarme* officers. Lawyer Fernando brought by a paper he needed John to sign that the *gendarme* officer in charge had to stamp. John humbly gave Major Toledo a signed copy of his book on free-market economics and policy, translated by a famous libertarian advocate of the military government named Hermógenes Pérez de Arce. She smiled with great appreciation, and the other two male officers in the room made positive remarks about it. "The textbook deals with free-market economics as opposed to communism," John remarked. The *gendarmes* were glad to hear it, none of whom had any love lost on communists. So he had a much better day than Karim, even if a little anxiety was stirring due to his trial starting in just over a week. All of 118's nonmozo *reos* were sure John would go to home arrest, although Arturo was keener on talking about John's exploits as a premier rat killer.

In the world outside, normal people have good days and bad ones. In prison, like hell, there are only bad days, some worse than others. Other *reos* in 118, especially Miami, Patricio, Franco, and Manuel, still thought it important to ask John daily how he was. For over ten months, his reply was the same: “Bad, I am in jail.” What else could be said? John was right. No matter how much these men tried to convince him that wellness was a state of mind, the fact remained that he was not just on a bad camping trip or at some rained-out picnic or baseball game, but rather he had been forced into confinement, for largely political reasons, compelled to fit into a filthy, dangerous, unyielding environment, surrounded by criminals. Other than perhaps the few Evangelicals during worship services, and Rubén and others learning to play chess from him, along with those temporarily inquisitive few wanting to learn something about economics or public policy from him, no one required John’s teaching services.

Once in a while, the colorful *machucados* would pick his brain about the meaning of the lyrics in some English song they were listening to and were at times disappointed when John could not understand rap songs any more than he could *coa*. Major Toledo borrowed his services to help her daughter pass English class, but she was not a *reo* and thus had a different mentality toward John. Nonetheless, some *machucados*, who prided themselves on their vast repertoire of knowledge, often sought to teach John, whom they viewed as *Inocente* (naive) and in need of their guidance. They enjoyed correcting his imperfect Spanish grammar and pronunciation or his evidently poor book-writing skills, suggesting improvements despite the fact that they had not read a book since grade school. Most notable in this quest was savant Manuel (whose resume had only three entries after high school diploma: “erstwhile prison guard, unwed father of three, and punctilious housekeeper”), clever Arturo, and sage Mauricio.

John was hardly used to this role reversal, which was nearly as hard to take as having to humbly and meekly listen to the largely ignorance-filled sermonettes of arrogant, opinionated prisoners. In the past, he had paid for high-quality people to teach him over the course of nine years at university and respectfully studied hard under their tutelage, and he was always learning something new from others he ran into or by informative libertarian podcasts (for example, C. J. Kilmer’s *Dangerous History* podcast had become one of his favorites), Reformed seminary lectures, or Baptist sermons, among other sources. But what could these largely uneducated *machucados* teach him (other than Miami on occasion about aviation or Chilean military history)?

Most *reos* think they are really smart, not just with respect to killing flies and rats, but also about law, medicine, immunology, public policy, electricity, psychology, plus other more esoteric fields of accumulated intelligence, like the *coa* dialect, cooking food with a *micrón*, hiding things from *gendarmes*, mortal combat techniques with sharp instruments, and how to forge spears from bunk bed rails and copper tubing. Indeed, John found himself surrounded by self-made geniuses who, perhaps with the exception of child rapists and girlfriend murderers who acted on spur-of-the-moment passion, were just unlucky when they got caught at their craft and sent to prison. Otherwise, they played it smart and were often keen to share their victory stories and helpful opinions with others to prove their genius.

Outside, people often paid for John’s opinion or to instruct them about economics and public policy, and many listened earnestly to what he had to say about the Bible and theology, but inside (with few exceptions), his knowledge and opinions were not worth a wooden nickel or a

red cent. Indeed, he was a bit of a conundrum who studied useless things for hours on end and was even a pariah because he chose to sit alone reading books and to study incessantly when he could be learning how to shoot up a police car in order to make a good getaway, crack a safe, hijack a bigrig, smuggle and distribute cocaine, or other “profitable” activities. Insofar as national and world events were concerned, most *machucados* stayed informed mainly by watching television, with few exceptions like Ismael, Miami, and Raúl (the elder). For most “smart” *machucados*, reading was some awful requirement imposed on them at public school, a task ten times more heinous than cleaning the vilest prison toilet.

But television made them wise. Speaking of which, Manuel had donated his television to some *reo* several days ago. John didn’t even notice it was gone. No wonder: Chilean shows were mostly socially, culturally, and politically leftist propaganda outlets, full of stupidity and light carnality or perversion often coated with Marxist philosophy. Daily events were gone over, with nauseating detail, on the news. What could be covered in fifteen minutes takes ninety. The Turkish, Mexican, and Chilean soap operas broadcast stink worse than rotten meat and were about as satisfying as rancid butter. Yet, John had to put up with such surroundings and the vainglorious teachers in prison who fed on that stuff day in and day out. Indeed, there was never a good day in prison. He was just thankful that he could use his mind, reading, and writing, even if his eyesight was not 100%, and his skin still itched.

One good thing about Ph. D.s is that they learn how to teach themselves, and John was able to make the best of a bad situation, like a firefighter who crawls inside his foil bag to survive in the midst of some awful conflagration. He kept thinking, too, about all the great sermons, lectures, and writing illustrations he was garnering as each day passed. He could literally write a book about his experiences! For instance, September 21st marked the end of winter, and the days were just as long in Chile as they were in the U.S.A. and Europe. He was in the midst of reading on the sunny *patio* about what butcher Stalin had done to the Kulaks, Cossacks, Orthodox Christians, and a smattering of everyone else when Miami (who had cut up the remaining raw meat in the morning after soaking some laundry in Clorox) was done grilling, and Aníbal called John to bring his chair over to the table.

He put his book away and sat next to Manuel, who was making his usual, now hackneyed, childish remarks about *vivos* and *perkins* with respect to John. Once again brought back to reality, John looked at the eighteen other *machucados* sitting with him around the two tables and made a quick accounting of the motley crew present: nine child rapists or child sex-abusers, two murderers, three robbers, one thief, two drug traffickers, plus he and Manuel, both accused or condemned for using a firearm in self-defense in public. He wondered how much longer he would have to bear with these circumstances. How could any reasonable participant say he was having a good day in this terrestrial hell, even if 118 was much better than other *módulos*?

John had to admit, however, that some good did come his way over the past weekend when a long-time client from Germany found him via email and paid him to edit two academic papers. They dealt with the economic theory of efficiently using auctions to establish or procure renewable energy utilization. John usually hated reading radical environmental gibberish but compared to listening to the *machucado* sages. It was a breath of fresh air. For four hours and thirty minutes, John’s thumbs led him back to the real world, and his total income for the year shot up to 180 USD, its lowest level since he was 14. Still, it was a welcome shot in the arm. If

he had a real keyboard instead of just his thumbs on a small screen, he could have probably finished editing and partially rewriting both papers in just three hours. Still, there was little doubt that he had some joy from being productive at doing something (besides his longer-term writing projects), and for several hours he could forget that he was living in the midst of the *machucados*.

Unfortunately, the glee would be short-lived. Manuel was leaving the mania mood phase for the manic one, and his harsh criticism and words returned. He made John feel like he was under the microscope again. Manuel's rage was set off when he saw John washing out a small skidmark in his underwear. "That is so unsanitary and wrong to do in the sink where we wash dishes and brush our teeth; it has to be done on the *patio*'s trough instead." Never mind that it was the only sink they had in the cell, and he was not dumping a diaper load of toddler poop in it. John, always obliging, put up with the fury and hearing the repetition of his sin five times, detailing just how evil, ill-mannered, and low-class he was. Remembering his Romans 12:18 duty to "pursue peace with all men" and that his trial started in just six days, he realized that would probably not have to tolerate Manuel for too much longer but that it would be prudent to take the high road and quietly, humbly, submissive, and patiently bear with Manuel. Besides, John had to be compassionate and understanding of those beleaguered by such mental illness.

Manuel railed on John for cooking sausages that night on account of the smoke, even though he knew John was going to cook them beforehand and had asked John not to cook his yet. He violently threw open the curtain further than John had, and turned on a fan to get the scent out, and huffed and puffed about other things after John had cleaned up and, even though he looked, he could find no errors. He did see a bag of chopped veggies that Marcelo came in earlier and left for him. Manuel accused John of bringing the bag up and then not eating it. John denied it, and upon hearing the truth, Manuel threw it and the dish sponge out the window down onto the *patio*. John thought, "Talk about low class!"

The day before, Manuel had preached to John that no one is perfect, but that doctrine only applied to him; John had to fulfill Manuel's rules and standards of manners and language perfectly or else. For instance, the word "please" in Spanish sentences must go at the beginning of a sentence and never at the end, although John doubted that Manuel was right. He could give John orders, but courtesy must prohibit John from doing the same; John always had to say "please" while Manuel did not. Manuel had criticized John a hundred times in the last six weeks and never once said anything positive about him or given him any appreciation. No matter: John did not look for man's commendation, so long as he had God's (1 Peter 2:19-20). Only in terms of his faith could he honestly say that he was having a good day, much like the three young Hebrew men protected by God in the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:25.

The next morning, Manuel was still mad and gave John a bunch of orders: take down the curtain and open the window, have the tablecloth washed, wipe any water off the floor, buy floor wax, and a couple of other things. He did not say, "please." However, John complied in order to keep the peace. Later that day, Manuel came back happy and talkative. He said he asked Major Toledo how she liked John's free-market economics textbook. She said that she had not had time to read it. He also said the psychologist had interviewed him unexpectedly, asking him questions in order to try to trip him up and thus not let him out on parole. Even if one is innocent, he always has to let the psychologist know how repentant and sorry he is for what he had done, even if not

true. Otherwise, no parole is granted. Her vote on the parole“technical” committee is weighty and would meet soon to decide Manuel’s fate.

Chileans often live in an alternate universe, it seemed to John, more often than not, based on some lie or lack of a reasonable basis. Indeed, their argumentation and logic were often so lame. In 118, the *reos* generally think that by repeating an opinion ten times or doing so more loudly, the person they are speaking to will agree with them. Thus, it was a waste of time to argue with them, especially Manuel, Karim, and Mauricio, John thought, as he returned to reading his book. Just then, Aaron appeared, asking why he did not get any *frugalé* yesterday? John pulled a couple from his jacket pocket and gave them to him. Maybe he had seen John slip a few to Miami earlier. Other than that, the day presented no excitement until later when Sergio called him down for a phone call in the *gendarme*’s office. It was the public defender, Guillermo, asking John to confirm that he would agree to his trial being semi-presencial due to the Covid-19 quarantine.

An in-person trial was most advantageous, but he deemed semi-in-person to be acceptable after speaking with some other lawyers about it. He wanted to leave jail as soon as he could. Waiting another two months would be unbearable while waiting for a fully in-person trial. Too, he needed to work and help his wife and to stop being a burden to others. He was probably not going to testify anyway, and he would be allowed to have his computer to communicate with his lawyers in real-time. He needed to leave it in God’s hands.

The next day, John ’s shoulder was bothering him more than normal, which is a bad way to start a day already predestined to be bad. At least Manuel had already reverted back into his mania mood phase, even heating John’s shower water completely. (He said it was a“reward“ for John’s good behavior in cleaning up well.) A little later, down on the *patio*, John was somewhat surprised (yet happy) that Silva called him out in order to speak kindly to him, to ask about his upcoming trial, and to convey other points of information about prison. He said that he knew the cells were being paid for (to the *suboficial mayor*) when he took over 118, and that is why he moved so many people around at first. He would not receive payments for such things and also thought it was just as bad for *gendarmes* to sell eggs, nuts, and other produce to *reos* at three to five times what they paid for them outside. He would not deal drugs either, noting that more than half the *gendarmes* do so, and hence should be put in jail. He said that when Karim left, so did the bad element for illegal transactions.

Silva bemoaned the fact that Karim ’s accusation in court nearly cost him his job but was pleased that the other *gendarmes* stood up for him. In the end, he was fine. All of his colleagues knew he was a straight shooter. John mentioned the situation with *Che*’s death threat and that he had had so much trouble with Castro, who was (as far as John was concerned) the“spoiled milk” among the *gendarmes*, explaining some of what Castro had done to him. Silva concurred and pointed to his head, saying that Castro lacked mental capacity. (“Well, chimp-brained men usually do,” John thought.)

Overall, Silva was happy with the way things were going in 118 ever since he took over and wished John well, who felt more secure than ever that he would not be booted out of 118 or his cell. Switching gears to legal news, John’s case file finally arrived, which Silva opened in John’s presence, but, alas, it was incomplete. Just a few days before trial and John and his wife had not

seen the complete case file, although they had seen most of it. The character of Chilean justice ranged from bad to a travesty. Pamela was still attempting to get a full copy on Friday, the next day. In the meantime, John was called to the *gendarme* officer's area, where he was told that the public defender team would be waiting to do a Zoomcast conference call with him at 3 p.m. He was surprised but glad to get more face time with his attorney Guillermo, who was usually so non-communicative. Guillermo said he communicated more with John than any of his other 200 clients.

However, none of his other cases were so much in the press, of national notoriety, and with such political motivation and bias. The case, too, was a bit complicated in terms of proving John's innocence against the two attempted murder charges and his alleged provocation of the riot in, and destruction of, Reñaca last November 10th. John and his wife, with others helping here and there (viz. his son David, witness Matthew, ballistics experts Jorge and Mauricio, and close friends Valentín and Joe), had found discrepancies and some new evidence wherein they formulated many questions for witnesses and police investigators who had written reports. When the appointed time arrived, Guillermo was on Zoom along with his office's boss and the regional head, both of whom had a keen interest in garnering a high-profile victory. After clarifying somewhat the logistics about how Pamela would get John's computer to the courthouse every day, so that he could send messages via Zoom, Google messenger, or Skype to his lawyer during the trial (John being isolated with a *gendarme* and ankle cuffed in an adjacent room).

The regional head, who had met John while inspecting conditions at *módulo* 109, said given that the quarantine had restricted trials to proceed only via videoconference mode (Zoomcast), they had not participated in a trial for any client that was at risk of going to prison (85% of their cases). However, they were so certain of victory in John's case that they were willing to go ahead with the semi-presencial trial format, where two of three judges and one of John's attorneys would connect remotely. No press or visitors other than witnesses would be allowed into the courtroom.

Nonetheless, John was not impressed by his lawyer's past optimism, wherein John ended up losing every hearing up to this point. Supposedly, this time would be different since the courtroom conditions would be distinct. Still, John worried because the lawyers had obviously not considered his questions delivered electronically in an Excel spreadsheet, nor had they contacted any of the three witnesses bolstering his defense: his foreman, his cardiologist (a Presbyterian elder), and his Haitian gardener who also went to the same Baptist church with John and Pamela for over a year. John was worried that they were unprepared, and, before God, he needed to make a good decision between the options set before him. He started to think that he should have Guillermo file the paperwork with the Constitutional Court and get a ruling that forced the lower court's trial to be presencial (in-person) instead of partially remote.

The two-month rescheduling delay would be hard on John, who would remain imprisoned, but it would be better to suffer more and then get a new lawyer, like Fernando, and go to trial prepared. Fernando had already approved of going ahead, and, after a long phone call with Guillermo, his former lawyer Fabiola agreed. Guillermo wrote to Pamela that he was far more prepared than John thought. Indeed, they had spent significant time and resources preparing their case. Hence, with a full day to mull it over, having awakened calm the following day (with blood pressure 123/72) and trusting in Providence, John decided to assign arbitrary points to the pros and cons

of the going-to-trial decision.

He hoped writing things down would help him make a better decision about going forward as scheduled or delaying the trial. First, the pros: the lawyers' confidence level (+3), no cost (+2), Fernando's approval (+1) and Fabiola's (+1), a new lawyer might be just as non-communicative as Guillermo, so "better the devil you know" (+1), Guillermo said he thought the three judges assigned were favorable for the case, being objective and impartial (+1), John's serious health care needs might be met faster (+2), John could start working and earn money sooner if victorious (+2), he might potentially not have to continue to be a burden on others, living off their charity (+1), since a semi-presencial trial is likely, not constitutional, going ahead would provide a small procedural point in John's favor, should an appeal be necessary (+1), John could possibly return sooner to help Valentín with the teaching ministry of the Historic Baptists group online Zoomcast (+1), the political timing was good because John's trial would coincide with activists protesting against the October 25th referendum about whether to write a new constitution (+1), that there was no guarantee that the constitutional court would rule in John's favor or that the Covid-19 quarantine would be lifted in two months (+1), Pamela was ill and needed John's help as soon as possible (+1), all the pressure on John had been causing his emotional state to deteriorate and the last thing he needed was to start entertaining thoughts of suicide (+1), and John had options on appeal (nullification), or through a treaty related to his first-world citizenship in Italy, countering any possible negative judgment and sentence (+1). All that summed to 21 points by John's scoring.

Second, the cons (that is, the benefits of waiting less the costs): being better prepared could produce a far better outcome in terms of avoiding years in jail (+25), but adding a new, private lawyer will cost a lot of money (-3), John would have to wait in jail for a couple more months (-2), he would lose more income (-2), there will be high stakes at risk by starting with a new legal team, and possibly biased judges (-1), John's increasingly poor emotional state may worsen (-1), Fernando (or another lawyer) might be worse than Guillermo, given his small practice, plus Pamela had discovered that he had a notary-fraud complaint lodged against him ten years ago (-1), John's current public defenders have been overconfident before and, should he keep them to reduce fees, their past performance might not provide a good indicator for the future (-1). Indeed, John's current defense team had shown little care for details, such as the logistics of getting John's computer into the courtroom or preparing his witnesses, indicating that they will likely do the same thing in the future. Those points summed to 14 to 18, depending on the lawyer route chosen.

Listing the items helped John think through an arbitrary and subjective problem. Most importantly, the exercise suggested that he should go with the semi-presencial trial next week. Like all accused men in 118, 107, and 111, John made the best decision he could given the available options, and then hoped and prayed for the best. His wife was content with the decision as well. As a dependent housewife, the trial outcome would affect her more than anyone but John himself.

In the meantime, she had to work on getting *encomienda* ready and getting her medical tests done. Several people had helped her with medical insurance and transportation expenses. John realized once again what a blessing it was to have so many good friends. On Thursday night prior to the trial, the public defender's office gave an exclusive interview (or leaked information)

to TV Channel 13, which revealed the expert testimony evidence to the public that all of John's four shots hit the ground first and any damage to the communist protester's thigh, or the other guy's radiator and gearbox, were accidents resulting from ricochets. John actually had a positive public image in the news for the first time in nearly eleven months. It also detailed how he was scared by the attacking protesters, rather than a hate-filled man going off half-cocked.

On Sunday, TV news stories ran about John's life, too. The public defender's office was doing its job. Once again, John was one of the most famous people in Chile. He and Guillermo had talked via the *gendarme's* office phone on Saturday the 26th. The defense team was surprisingly well prepared. Guillermo would be in the courtroom personally, and a second defense lawyer would connect and be present via Zoom. John had done his part, too. The prosecution had four lawyers. Now John had but wait for the *gendarme* to get him between 6:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. the next morning, take him to a holding cell where he would remove all his clothes and be searched, then ankle- and wristchained, and after that humbly and uncomfortably bused to the courthouse for the first day of trial. His wife was to bring his computer, suit coat, pants, and dress shirt around 10:30 a.m. Ties were not allowed since *reos* might use them to hang themselves. Manuel, Miami, Sergio, Aaron, and Ismael made a point of wishing John well in his trial over the next two weeks. The only one of them he would see (other than on weekends) would be his cellmate, Manuel, since he would be leaving prior to the *reos* going down to the *patio* and returning after they were locked up again.

If one thinks of it, prisoners, and the judicial system that creates and keeps them, has startlingly clear parallels with Negro chattel slavery. With the latter, fellow tribesmen (or warring rival clans) kidnapped or captured black Africans and held them as wholesale merchandise to sell to the next European slave ship that came by. Those retailers transported the Negroes and prepared them for sale. In the New World, a whole other brokerage, consulting, and logistics crew stood by to receive and handle the "merchandise:" classifying it, beautifying it, certifying it, auctioning it off, and perhaps arranging its transportation to the plantations of successful bidders. Lots of people got a piece of the action for Negroes fetching around USD 75,000 apiece, on average, using current dollar equivalents. The slave owners profited from labor and other services (like chattel childbearing and wet nursing), net of the cost of housing, clothing, feeding, and keeping these beleaguered Negroes warm. "Can people see the parallel?" John wondered.

Chilean prisoners are, in many ways, akin to black slaves, and the *gendarme* system is like the plantation owner. The only real difference is that the latter does not have to finance the purchase; taxpayers do so (by force, of course). Accordingly, the police and courts, which are the retailers, take men by force and deliver them to the *gendarmes*, who gross 760,000 pesos per month per *reo*, whether sick or well. No forced labor has to be done to obtain these revenues, other than *mozo* semi-slave labor that they perform to qualify for parole. Profits are maximized by efficiency, providing minimum food and medical care services sufficient to keep the "slaves" alive and the monthly revenues rolling in. Common-trough feeding prepared by *mozo* semi-slave labor, akin to communist consumption, has also proven to be a cost-minimizing solution for the modern "masters."

On top of that, a majority of *gendarmes* profit from corruption, merchandise sales to prisoners, and drug trafficking on the side. It is good business all the way around! People like John, Miami, Manuel, and some others, are merely one-shot deals and thus are less valuable to the *gendarmes*

(much like the American Indians placed on chain gangs who ran away too often to be good slaves like the blacks were). The *gendarmes* knew that something like 95% of *machucados* released on parole would be back in jail in short order and thus form part of the continuous revenue stream. They just had to wait for the *machucado* to commit another crime.

All the retail service providers and assistants were delighted with such a revolving door, since judges, prosecutors, psychologists, expert witnesses, and a host of others kept getting their piece of the action, like firms providing food, medical supplies, cleaning supplies, kiosk concessions, and medicines to the prisons. One-shot deals were fine, but the repeat business was better. Why would anyone want such a lucrative setup to stop? So many benefit by the incarceration of the relatively few, and the rationally ignorant taxpayer picks up the tab. It is a dream come true! John then realized why a corrupt judiciary and prison system, including the lucrative privately owned prisons, would never be a thing of the past. Like with Negro chattel slavery, there are so many hands out receiving good money from the *status quo* that there is little hope to ever see things change. The incentives are too perverse.

The *reos* often complain that there are not enough training programs to help them once they get out. What they do not understand is such programs are the last thing that *gendarmes*, wholesalers, and retailers of prisoner“chattels” want. Not only do such programs increase costs that reduce the *gendarme*’s bottom line, they significantly increase the possibility that a repeat offender neither repeats nor returns. And that is simply bad business for everyone involved, besides the chattel, of course. That troubling situation was precisely where John found himself as he entered the trial phase to see if he might go back to his normal life again.

Chapter XVI

Count It All Joy

Week #1 of John's trial

The yellow nylon vests imprinted with *imputado* (accused) worn by prisoners going to court were too snug on John. Chile certainly has some big and tall people, descendants of Croatians, Germans, and other Europeans, but most of them tend to be “midgets,” as Pamela often liked to say. The whole first day of trial was sort of a bummer. John got a *gendarme* who did not make him strip naked, just drop his drawers. That was good, but everything slid downhill from there. Indeed, the *paco* cruelly took his toilet paper, saying it would be provided at the courtroom holding cells, which John already knew was not true. Oh well. John sent the chain with cuffs he was given down one pant leg. He was told to face the wall and lift one foot at a time in order to be ankle cuffed and locked. He knew the drill. He had done it six times before. Then the vest straps, which were too short to be used normally, given that John was not a “midget,” were woven through his belt loops and tied upfront at the place where the handcuffs got attached (lower abdominal area). The cuff was way too tight on John's permanently swollen right wrist, which had been operated on three times. No one cared.

The paddy wagon came after about forty-five minutes, which is a long time when one is stuffed into a sausage skin, cuffed in four places, and locked in a grimy semiopen-air 3-meter × 3-meter holding cell. John was surprised that no one else but he was making the miserable trip to town, but at least he would be alone if he had to vomit. The *gendarmes* go around so many curves too fast. He could not see much through the window slots either. “This is just another glimpse of hell,” he thought.

Thirty minutes later, he hobbled out past some tough-looking, shotgun-bearing *gendarme* and checked into the next grimy 3.5-meter × 1.8-meter holding cell, featuring plaster coating all carved up with names and whatnot. He waited there another hour, sitting on a concrete bench built into the back wall, and sang many hymns plus a couple of old songs, like “Wise men say only fools rush in, but I can't help falling in love with you.” The *gendarmes* were treating him nicely. One even uncuffed his left hand so he could undo his zipper and hold his penis to urinate in the open stall masquerading as a bathroom. John felt a little creepy as he watched him pee. He told John that he had never freed a hand for anyone else. “I must be special,” John mused. But the *pacos* all knew John was innocent and therefore “special,” not worthy of being denigrated and humiliated quite as much as others.

One *gendarme* told John something that he had heard several times before, “If I had been in your situation, I would have done the same thing.” Thirty minutes prior to trial, they moved John to the meeting room, with a phone on each side separated by plexiglass with holes in the middle to let sound pass through. The other side had a computer with Microsoft Windows 7 running. He was not sure why the flat screen faced the other half of the room. For John, the best part of this room was getting to sit on a well-used padded office chair. He wanted to try to catch a few winks. Then *gendarme* Nicolás, who would accompany John during the trial that day, brought in garbage-bag-thin plastic pants, gloves, and shirt coverings (blue and white) to protect others from catching Covid-19. It all looked ridiculous but at least covered up the yellow vest, to

Guillermo's satisfaction. "My wife was supposed to bring a suit for me to change into. Did you get it?" Nicolás sternly replied that there would be no changing clothes. Guillermo was mistaken when he assured Pamela that she could do so and that he wanted John looking professorial. That was not going to happen. John was the plastic defendant.

Guillermo was also wrong in telling Pamela she could bring John lunch. Good thing John had had a ham and cheese sandwich at 6:30 a.m. As it was, he did not get to eat till he got back to the cell around 3:30 p.m. A few minutes later, Nicolás took John up to the fourth floor and set him in the room. That's when John saw his notebook computer for the first time in nearly eleven months. It was almost like a family reunion! The first hour of trial was spent trying to get John's and Guillermo's Gmail/Google message system to work after the judges denied Guillermo's request to let John sit next to him at the table. The mighty jurists are so worried about Covid-19 infection in a 15-meter × 10-meter room where everyone has a mask or face shield. Only John had to wear plastic, probably because they knew that as many as ten *reos* were crammed into a 3-meter × 3-meter cell without masks and without running water (to wash hands) up to twenty-one hours per day. It was highly probable that a *machucado* had Coronavirus. The "slaves" were certainly treated differently than the top 0.5% of income earners in Chile. However, John was more preoccupied with other things.

Nicolás kept pestering John not to use Skype or other programs other than Google Messenger. "Why does he care?" John signaled one of the IT workers to flag down his lawyer, who was coming over during a break, revealing Nicolás' unwanted behavior. Guillermo explained to the judge what was going on, and the judge ordered Nicolás to leave John's hands uncuffed with the liberty to use any programs he wanted to use and to leave the microphone open so that at any time he could say something and interrupt the proceedings in order to speak with his lawyer. The judge asked John if he had spoken to his lawyer about remaining silent and what the conclusion was, to which John replied, "Yes, and I will remain silent for now." John eyed the suit and dress shirt (with belt) that his wife had left for him on the bench behind him. He was sitting in the unoccupied courtroom, with a huge screen broadcasting (by Zoom) the trial next door. Nicolás stopped him and later made him abandon the clothes bag when taking him to the holding cell. John wondered if he would ever see his suit again.

Then the opening salvos began, and all eyes were fixed on the screen. The prosecution alleged that John fired five shots (not four), that he only went to the beach area that day after planning (from home) to go down and kill people, that he caused the thousands of people gathered there for enjoyment to turn violent and destroy the town, and that he was hate-filled and politically motivated. Guillermo responded that John's pickup was "corralled" and attacked first, and he then fired four shots at the ground to dissuade the criminals. The defense would show scientifically via experts that a ricochet hit Ahumada's thigh below and exited his buttocks. The radiator and gearbox, too, were hit accidentally by a ricochet, if indeed they were struck by a bullet at all. He had no intention to kill anyone, just to keep himself safe.

Guillermo also added that John's cultural upbringing in America influenced his chosen defensive actions that day. He further argued that the case should have nothing to do with politics but rather the facts, taking into account the riotous circumstances that were engulfing Chile at that time. The opening statements were short. Given that quitting time was only forty minutes away, the judge asked the prosecutor if she thought there was sufficient time to call her

first witness (two were waiting in the benches where the public usually sits and watches). She said, “No” and the judge chose to adjourn for the day. The IT guy would look after John’s computer. John regretted putting it in “sleep” mode rather than shutting it down so that a password would have been required to use it. Hindsight is 20-20.

John was re-chained and brought back to the holding cell for another hour and a half, waiting for another prisoner named Gonzalo and some lady with him to be arraigned, after having been caught dealing a kilogram of cocaine. He was a fan of John’s and gave him a Chilean highfist (like a high-five). Gonzalo had never been to jail, so John took it upon himself to explain how prison worked, from *perkins* to drugs to characteristics of different módulos (he would likely go to 111), among other things. Just then, John realized that he had become somewhat of an expert on Chilean jail life, a sad new entry to put on his resume. Once back in 118, cooking *quesadillas* in his cell, Silva, Sergio, Ismael, and later Manuel asked how things went. He explained that the ball had just gotten rolling, and there were still two more weeks of hearings to come.

Day two came with similar humiliation for John, chained by nice and supportive *gendarmes*, then brought to court. The plastic covering excluded the pants this time, however, and plastic was draped over John’s upper section, revealing some of his shirt and coat sleeves. The *gendarme* let John remove the yellow vest for trial, which was a real improvement. Still, he had to put plastic shoe coverings, a food worker’s hairnet, and another mask over his normal one. Manuel had cut John’s hair on Sunday in vain! In short, he looked like a lame hospital clown, and Guillermo said he took a picture to remember him by. John got the judge’s permission to approach the screen and look closely at the evidence presented, an action which the *gendarme* had been prohibiting. John’s communication with Guillermo was fluid, and he also stopped the proceedings twice to speak to Guillermo. He had the ability to communicate with his wife and others, too. In a sense, it was better than sitting next to his lawyer.

The entire day was taken up with the prosecution’s key witness, Carabinero Captain Guzmán, presenting his agency’s report, opinions, and he was asked questions by the district attorney. Both Guillermo and John were pleasantly delighted that he helped the defense as much or more than he hurt John. He made clear that the shots were ricochets, that Ahumada lied in his affidavit, as did his friends in theirs, and that John’s first shot that hit Ahumada was somewhat random since it was impossible that John aimed at Ahumada using his sights. It was a ricochet and, thus, by implication, was not intentional and, therefore, not attempted murder. Ahumada had also sworn that he saw John aiming at him. And the Investigative police’s drawing showed Ahumada next to the pickup’s bed and John outside the truck. Guzmán showed pictures of Ahumada standing on the sidewalk next to a stoplight post, where a bullet hit him in his thigh, broke in two (as a damaged bullet might), with the main shard exiting his upper leg under his buttocks.

All of this was good news for John. Other things mentioned were not, like the position of Molina’s car, directly behind John at the stoplight, who supposedly then parked 52.4 meters behind John after he drove off, against the curb, despite the fact that John had just fired shots (Guzmán mistakenly said once when it was really twice, insofar as John recalled, although he could be mistaken). Guzmán claimed that instead of shooting Molina at the stoplight when he was only a few meters behind him, John drove 80 or more meters, stopped, got out, and fired at Molina 52.4 meters behind him. John’s precision was not good at that distance, he said, with just a small 1.5° change in John’s aim producing a significant difference of where it impacted the

target 52.4 meters away. In this case, it ricocheted off the pavement and hit Molina's radiator, and then settled in his gearbox. He implied or assumed that a 135 grain, plastic-filled hollow-point, the 40-caliber bullet had that sort of power, even after ricocheting. He talked about just how powerful a 40-caliber bullet is and that only recently were the Chilean police considering using it.

John raised some questions with Guillermo via text messaging. For instance, a bullet ricocheting at 15° from a hard, flat (concrete) surface must have been fired from 345°, setting 0°/360° as straight up. Given a 6'3" tall man firing a shot from 52.4 meters away at a radiator, hitting the pavement 1.47 meters before it, what angle would the man have been pointing his gun? Would the ricochet have the same angle? It is a long shot, too, but Guzmán made the stunning claim that the pistol could be used effectively up to 1,500 meters away!

Guzmán was setting up the means for the prosecution to get around the ricochet problem by saying that even though John was a good shot, he simply missed his target badly at such a long distance. The videos, however, show John only shooting in the direction of the young man who appeared and was throwing rocks at him, not Molina. Moreover, it seems that John's shot would have had to pierce or travel through or under several other cars before impacting the ground and Molina's radiator. That seemed very unlikely! More likely was that one of John's first ricochets hit the car when it was near, assuming that it was really hit by a bullet at all. John communicated all this to Guillermo, hoping for other videos showing the angle of firing. Later on, Guzmán presented two videos that showed the firing angle better.

The prosecution, over Guillermo's objection, was allowed to ask questions about transcriptions of some of the videos from John's libertarian show on YouTube, which had been banned by the trial preparation judge. That turned out to be a small setback. The district attorney used the debate to tell the judges that the defense wanted the material excluded because it showed that he was guilty. Guzmán insinuated that Pamela's participation in the yellow vests chat group meant that John had all the information she had, which was false. Guzmán said that John bought 250 rounds a few days prior to the event, but John had a legal right to buy up to 15,000 rounds, and he used none of them when attacked.

The police report confirmed that he used hollowpoint rounds acquired in the United States. Guzman said that if John were a *carabinero*, he would have simply fled the scene when he could have. But John was not a *carabinero*, nor did he have the same standards of training or conduct. Guzmán said there was a party atmosphere (in the video) going on ahead of John, not a violent one. But the video also showed John speeding ahead, right after his pickup was corralled and shaken, with people hitting it and yelling, "Son of a bitch, kill him!" after he showed them his pistol (prior to firing it). He was hardly paying attention to parties up ahead. Guzmán said that John did not have time to put bullets in his clip, but John had already said in a previous hearing that the clips were full, and he only needed a few seconds to put it in the pistol and load the gun. Guzmán said John shot back toward the crowd, but the videos show the angle was toward the corner of Las Brisas Street. And why, again, did Molina park behind John? The photo was hardly clear that Guzmán used to point out Molina's car, impossible to identify as his. Guzmán admitted that John was seated in the cabin of his truck, opened the door, crossing his right hand over his body to shoot. It was not possible for him to aim directly at Ahumada.

The rest of the day's events covered some further details. Videos 5 and 6 showed the angle of his next shots, which were fired only after he had to duck incoming rocks. Guzmán claimed that John fired a shot over the beach as he was driving away, which did not happen and would have been difficult to do, and the casing found inside John's pickup was from that round. But the ejected casing could have banked off the window or door and come back in from the first two shots at the stoplight. Video 7 provided the sound of a gunshot only while John sped away, but that could have been a bottle that another video shows John running over and breaking, or it could be the bullet of another shooter. Guzmán said that the gun club's website showed it was closed on Sunday, but John had never visited that site. He also said John did not take the shortest (most logical) route home after seeing the club was closed. However, John had planned to meet Matthew Merrick at the beach and thus chose the scenic and often faster, albeit 300 meters longer, a route that could take him back home. Both Guillermo and John thought the prosecution's argument about route choice was ridiculous.

John also wanted to hear Guzmán's explanation for the shape of the holes in the radiator and gearbox, and why there was apparently no exit hole. Guzmán assumed that John covered his license plate at home to hide from the police when he did so to keep the criminals who attacked him and might be following him from identifying it. If John thought the police were after him, why would he have gone home and later invited them in? Guzmán stated that *carabineros* never use pistols to dissuade people. But John had nothing else to use and was not a *carabinero*.

After that, the gendarme took John to the holding cell where Guillermo's office staff had left him take-out, consisting of chicken, rice, salad, and flan. After gobbling it down, he returned alone to 118 via paddy wagon to rest and prepare for yet another day in court.

Day three was consumed by testimony from two men. First, Guzmán, who constantly referred to John by his first name (unusual in Chile in formal situations, as if John were his pal), and who would have been on the stand longer had the prosecutor not proclaimed along the way that he was not a ballistics expert and, second, a mendacious medical-legal expert, Mauricio Tepper. The proceedings were no longer open to the public, and the only media on the Zoomcast was the judicial power's internal press corps. (The national news services continued to report that the prosecution was seeking a seventeen-year jail term for John but little else.) Otherwise, it was three judges (two remotely), the technical assistant, John's two defenders (Guillermo and one remotely, Osvaldo Valenzuela), and the four prosecutors (Paola Rojas, Carlos Oliva, Andrés Lagos, for Intendente Martínez of Valparaíso, and another one remotely, scummy Human Rights Institute liar also defending Ahumada along with Carlos Oliva, Rita Diaz Torres, who earlier made up that she had a video wherein John claimed to want to gas blacks and pull gold teeth out of Haitian's mouths).

John remained alone in the adjacent room along with the *gendarme*, who let him tear off all his plastic today but forced him to keep the yellow vest on. (Actually, John had stuffed the headwear in his back pocket while *gendarme* Nicolás was not looking.) The morning's humiliating routine was not changed, although John did not have to remove his underwear, and he spent less time in the holding cells since the trial started at 9 a.m., and he was returned to prison shortly after the hearing. He left so fast on the way back that he had to take his sausage, garbanzo bean and pumpkin stew, salad, and flan provided by the public defender's office back to 118 with him.

Three blabbermouth thieves rode with him, who knew the jail scene well. They were somewhat fascinated to be riding with a celebrity shooter like John. The paddy wagon had three compartments, two used to separate genders, and the other at the back where the armed *gendarmes* sat. (They turned in their weapons at the prison gate.) Even at the courthouse, their clips could not be loaded in their pistols. John looked down at one of the drains in the floor during the morning ride, puzzled about it until one of the thieves, who had a large red bump on his partly bald head where the cop had hit him, spat on the floor. The one-way doors, only 50 centimeters wide and 1.6 meters high, were bolted shut for the trip, and the skinny thief could only make gestures to his girlfriend through the plexiglass and bars.

John mused about his weird current life. Once back, he ate lunch in his cell (at the *gendarme's* suggestion) and then went out to the *patio* for thirty minutes, where Rubén and Miami greeted him, eagerly wanting to know how the trial was going. Later, Aaron, Delfín, and even Moroni also inquired briefly, just as the *gendarme*, Carlos, and Sergio had done when he arrived in chains. Ismael, wholly fallen from grace now, didn't hang around to listen as he pranced about with his new floppy Mohawk haircut.

Basically, the day had gone well again for John. Guzmán totally trashed Ahumada's testimony, showing him to be a liar at several points. He had testified before three state entities, including the district attorney, each time with a slightly different version. No one would believe him now, and all would know that he was feigning his leg pain in order to keep getting loafer benefits. Guzmán changed his story, upon watching the videos played by Guillermo, agreeing that the beach crowd had turned rambunctious and violent before John fired his gun at the ground (denying Ahumada's communist attorney Oliva's assertion the shot was fired behind him directly at his leg rather than to the side at the ground). He admitted hearing one yell, "Son of a bitch, kill him!" before a shot was fired. A judge had him confirm the same. He said John's feet never left the floor in front of the driver's seat and thus never took aim at anything behind him. Strangely, he denied that the first of the two thuds heard on the video was a shot (which it was), stating instead that it was someone hitting or kicking his truck. Guillermo got him not to rule out that it could have been a rock, which would make John's first shot a reply against physical aggression besides the verbal threats and insults.

Speaking of rocks, he confirmed that some of the stones used against John were the size of soccer balls and that rocks that size are not native to Reñaca beach but were rather brought in for riotous purposes. He further stated (incorrectly) that John fired a shot over the beach as he was driving away, even though the prosecution wanted him to say it happened before he was underway, and many people were around. He lamely said that he did not know if the shell casing behind the passenger side seat could have banked off the door when John shot the first time, insisting that it came from his alleged final shot toward the beach. Guzmán said he did not know if the hollow-point ammunition used by John was bought a few days before at the gun club (it was not, and John had brought it legally from the U.S.A.) nor did he know the maximum quantity of bullets that he could purchase with his license (3,000 per pistol). He did confirm that the human barricade was sanctioned by Chilean legislation and was considered illicit, aggressive behavior, and also confirmed that John did not injure anyone or run the obstructionists over by surging ahead. One judge asked Guzmán why he did not interview Molina formally. He said his underlings do that; he just spoke to him on the phone. He mentioned that Molina's car was so old that it was not worth fixing and had to be towed to the police mechanic in Placilla for evaluation.

Overall, Guillermo was pleased that liar Ahumada had been destroyed as a witness. The same thing happened to 25-year-old and perhaps somewhat incompetent medical/legal expert Lepper, who (as an affiliate of the district attorney) was caught lying about not knowing that Ahumada was released the same day from the hospital with not-to-serious injuries. Curiously, no prosecutor brought up what they had mentioned in prior hearings, namely that the bullet passed within a few millimeters of the femoral artery.

Apparently, it had not. Guillermo was certainly not going to bring it up, but Tepper did make a general statement that striking it could be lethal. He also added that more specialized tests would have to be run to determine further adverse effects. He evaded Guillermo's query about why the exit hole was smaller than the entry hole and why the bullet fragmented in two parts within soft tissue, with one fragment still left inside his leg. Lepper refused to say that it could have been a ricochet. He admitted that the entry wound was lower in the leg than the exit wound, going from front to back, indicating that it was either a ricochet or (absurdly) that John shot him while lying on his back from below. Instead, he noted that the trajectory might be due to Ahumada cocking his leg up horizontally and taking direct fire from John from his truck, just as Ahumada claimed in his sworn statements. The young Tepper was happy to believe Ahumada's story. So, all told, if these were star witnesses for the prosecution, who largely supported John's version, the trial could be said to be going well for John. Nevertheless, there were still 26 witnesses to go. Manuel later remarked that all was going well for him, too, during the trial, but in the end, the looney judges still convicted him. In other words, be happy with the daily outcome, "but don't get your hopes up."

Day four was another net win in court for John, but Guillermo urged him not to count his chickens before they were hatched since the trial still had a long way to go. Ahumada's testimony was riddled with uncertainties and contradictions, framed in hardly intelligible Spanish, and Guillermo showed him to have lied on several occasions with respect to: (1) his participation in the "dance or don't pass" human barricade, (2) his assaults on John's pickup truck, (3) his claim to have been two meters directly behind John when he was shot, (4) his assertion that John stepped out of the vehicle, extended both arms and shot him point-blank in the leg, which he says he bent upward at the knee (in sudden shock), yet (5) he recalled that John was his same height (1.72 meters), whereas John is noticeably 17cm (7 inches) taller. In other words, he clearly never saw John get out, as Guzmán and some videos confirmed. He said he arrived by local bus, and neither he nor his four young friends brought rocks in their backpacks, noting that his backpack was later lost. He was clearly a liar and not a credible witness. He added that the crowd easily saw John's fluorescent yellow vest as he drove up to the stoplight, agitating them and causing insults to fly.

Guillermo played the video footage of that stage of the event prior to the first shots and asked Ahumada to indicate his position, especially near the back of the truck, coming out of the bathroom, etc. He could not, of course, since he was standing elsewhere, and all that he said was made up. Ahumada claimed the contradictions in his three sworn declarations to the authorities were due to his not having yet been to the psychologist to clear his head. Yet Guillermo made him read a document he signed with such a contradiction after his treatment had started. Thus, it was pretty easy to state that John achieved total victory over Ahumada and seriously undermined the attempted murder charge related to him.

Undercover *carabinero* First Sergeant Uribe's testimony was another story. The prosecution gained some ground with it. He said that violence, destruction, and misbehavior by the mob did not begin until John fired. He said that he did not hear the insults against John, the one man yelling, "Son of a bitch, kill him!" prior to shots being fired, although he did admit that the human barricade had been going on for an hour before John arrived and that when Uribe had arrived in the morning, there were no large rocks or pavement pieces to throw at windows to be seen. Obviously, they were brought in by the protesters, who never had peaceful intent (even though both Ahumada and Uribe claimed the atmosphere was jovial). He assured everyone that he saw John shoot back at the crowd twice after he got out, although Uribe's poor vantage point was located on the beach walkway. He further stated that John shot toward the crowd on the beach while driving away (which never happened). He said he heard two shots at first, drawing his attention to the scene, but later said the first shot was only something hitting the truck hard, followed by one shot, an opinion he revised after speaking to Guzmán.

A photographer came from Santiago to testify about the pictures of John's pickup he took the night of the event, noting that he was told by someone else what shots to take and did not intentionally miss photographing the most heavily damaged areas. A police laboratory expert from Santiago testified that there were no nitrates or other expected residues on John's hands or gun, indicating either that either he never fired it (which was obviously not the case) or that he had washed his hands and cleaned his gun (the latter never happened) since the tests were done timely. Thus, Uribe cast doubt on John's credibility and challenged the idea that he cooperated with the investigation. Guillermo then brilliantly asked her if similar tests run on the cloth in John's truck were positive since the supposed nearby alleged shot (and case ejection) would have produced gases that would have left a trace on the passenger side headrest. There was little doubt that no one cleaned the seats, yet the result was negative. That fact confirmed that John did not make a final shot from inside the cab while driving (and shifting gears). The countervailing evidence effectively nullified the value of that witness for the prosecution. Hence, one might say that, overall, John got one win and two ties but still won the overall match on day four.

John's morning had been the same as other mornings this week, albeit with a little less humiliation (no undressing) from the new *gendarme*, who struck up a friendly conversation and indicated that he sided with John in his action against the criminal assailants, along with communists or hard leftists. Likewise, at the courtroom holding cells, *gendarme* Cristófer greeted John with, "Hello, hero," and proceeded to show John a picture of his caricature captioned "Chilean hero" that he had seen plastered on a wall in downtown Viña del Mar. Nicolás and all the other *gendarmes* there (insofar as John could tell) backed John, too, just like the lady lieutenant did who was present when John got back to 118. She reminded him that she was present at his arraignment and agreed with his actions. She also recalled hundreds of leftists and goons outside who arrived with bags full of rocks to pelt John's paddy wagon as he departed on November 11, 2019.

The time after the hearing was not uneventful. First, John threw up the takeout lunch brought to him (by the defender's office) as soon as he ate it. He apologized to the *gendarmes* for messing up the cell floor and figured the food must have been bad. After a long wait, Nicolás finally headed back to 118 with John, after hitting a terrible traffic jam on the way. Second, they also stopped by the Valparaíso courthouse and picked up recently arraigned Cristián, who was just picked up for his role in auto theft and shooting his 33-round Taurus 9mm pistol illegally. He

knew all about the penitentiary since he had just been released a year earlier, after serving ten years for murder and robbery with intimidation. He was a slave heading back to his master. John thought, “You just never know who you might run into these days. It’s another day in paradise.”

Day five was “the best day so far,” said Guillermo, which struck John as odd since archenemy Ahumada had had his credibility destroyed the day before. John forgot to note that that day also featured the investigating police incriminating themselves (by *carabinero* Uribe’s admission) that the PDI reached across John’s property line without permission and removed the wood covering his license plate. “That was illegal and the evidence inadmissible, right?” John postulated. “Correct,” Guillermo replied, but the witnesses today gave us even more important points. The fifth day was nothing unusual in terms of the trip to court and back, other than that each day the *gendarmes* seemed to be treating John a little better in terms of eliminating strip searches, lessening hand- and ankle-cuff tightness, requiring wearing fewer plastic bags, and showing themselves to be friendly and supportive. Someone had plastered posters on a few public posts or sidewalk boxes in downtown Reñaca with “John Cobin: Chilean hero.”

On the way back to 118, once the paddy wagon got to the prison gate, John overheard the driver say, “I’m transporting the *gringo*,” so they opened right up without delay, directly to 118. Nonetheless, in court, John was no better than any other slave or criminal brought there.

District Attorney Rojas seemed to have made an error when calling the official *carabinero* translator to read and comment on the document he prepared from John’s English-language YouTube broadcast with his son David (who could not join the call) and friends. John had opted to remain silent during the trial, but through the reading of this document, he was able to state that he was assaulted by many people (attacking his truck), that he feared for his life, that he used his gun to dissuade their advance, that he was worried they would come and harm his wife after the police took him away, that he was on his way to the gun club, and that (without insult) stated that an innocent bystander had been wounded in the leg. All this was stated without giving the district attorney or other prosecuting lawyers a chance to cross-examine him. The other witnesses were technical but also proved useful.

The ballistics expert confirmed that John’s guns were in working order, that he had used plastic-ball-tipped bullets that were less lethal than hollow-point bullets, that the 40 caliber round was more potent than the 9-millimeter one, but its pistol clip held fewer rounds, and yet many police forces had chosen to opt for the 40-caliber Sig Sauer pistol, including the FBI and many Latin American police forces. That caliber was used in gun clubs in Chile, and some Chilean police were opting for it, too. Thus, neither John’s gun nor ammunition was so unusual or especially lethal like the prosecution had implied. The expert said that other rounds were even more powerful. He stated that the effective range for a pistol like the Sig Sauer 40 caliber was 25 to 50 meters.

Guillermo shrewdly asked permission for John to come to the adjacent courtroom (fully cuffed as the district attorney demanded) so that he could show a little ballistics expertise himself and make a smart comment out loud about powder differences between rounds, once again testifying without being subject to cross-examination. The other expert had tested Ahumada’s pants for burn marks or residue from John’s barrel that would confirm that he was shot at very close range. The investigative police’s sketch set the distance at 1.6 meters, but John’s arm plus the barrel

length are over a meter. Moreover, Ahumada had testified that his knee was raised, and John's arms were fully extended, further reducing the distance between his thigh and John's muzzle. The results favored John. No residue or burn marks meant that the shot was not so close. Furthermore, chemical analysis of the pants showed unusual residue traces, allowing the expert to conclude that the shot was not fired at close range or picked up other substances between the time it was fired and the moment of impact, for example, by ricocheting off something. All of these points summed to indicate that John had no premeditated hatred in his heart, shot dissuasively, and that Ahumada was hit by a ricochet accidentally, supporting the conclusion that John did not attempt to murder anyone and that Ahumada was lying. Given that two-thirds of John's potential seventeen-and-a-half-year sentence was based on attempted murder charges, the results were indeed important.

Back at 118, arriving earlier than the day before, John met a new *gendarme*, Cabo Olivares (nicknamed *Conejo* or rabbit). Rumor had it that Silva had been temporarily suspended and possibly dismissed from his duties in 118 after having severely beaten one of the *mozos* so badly that his back was wholly black and blue. Rabbit knew about John and wanted to know how the trial was going, as did Sergio, Aníbal, Carlos, and Aaron, who were slaving away pouring meter-squared concrete bases for some shed to be set in front of 118. John noticed that the others were locked in their cells, but to stay out later and do something as horrible as concrete work was considered a privilege.

John realized once again that he was a fish out of water in prison, and he frequently daydreamed about being back in his own environment. The colonel in charge of the prison had transferred to another desk job in Santiago, perhaps finding his preferred environment, leaving Major Toledo in charge. For now, John had nothing better to do in his weekend free time than watch a movie and read more of the *Black Book of Communism*.

The following Sunday was mostly business as usual. Miami had washed John's clothes by hand the day before (including the collared purple-checked, long-sleeve shirt and white pants that John wore every day to court), and they were dry today. Miami always turned the clothes inside-out to wash them, then folded them that way, too, and put them in a plastic sack. So John had to unfold them, reverse them, fold them again and put them on his shelves. But something always came along to break such monotony in 118.

Cabo Penailillo (*Regalón*) was in charge of the *módulo* that day, with still no sign of Silva, and he, too, was a huge fan of John's. Whenever he saw John, he would smile widely and say "*gringo!*" (several times a day). "I have been a fan ever since I saw the *gringo* on television taking on the *huevones* and criminals in Reñaca," he said while visiting Manuel and John in the barber room. The main problem with *Regalón* was that he had to be paid off. Accordingly, he mentioned to Manuel that he was out of cigarettes, and Manuel said, "I do not have any money, but the *gringo* does." Manuel was one of those people who always found it easy to spend other people's money. "Sure, what would you like?" John replied. *Regalón* threw down an empty box of Lucky Strikes. Soon afterward, Sergio appeared to take kiosk orders, and John asked him to get the cigarettes, along with cheese, juice, and flavored water. Having never bought any in his life, he had no idea how expensive brand-name cigarettes were: 5,800 pesos! Obviously, the price was loaded with a "sin" tax. After receiving his booty, *Regalón* was now even happier with John, but the payoff did not end there.

After the men returned to their cells (*era*), Manuel came in and again told John that the “needy” *gendarme* needed something to drink. He asked John if he could give *Regalón* an unopened bottle of pear-flavored water, and John obliged. Later, John asked Manuel, who was showing signs of entering his manic phase, if it was really worth paying 7,000 pesos to the guard (USD 10), who was only occasionally in charge of 118. He was worried, too, about creating a dependency wherein every time *Regalón* came, he would expect to be given something. Manuel said it was worth the investment since *Regalón* would now let them talk on their cell phones without any hitch. He used to see Karim using his phone while living with Manuel and did nothing adverse. John trusted Manuel’s judgment usually, but this time he had some doubts. “Please remember that Pamela usually gives me 20,000 pesos per week to buy food and cleaning supplies. You just burned a third of it.” *Regalón* was a really nice guy and a fan, but he also earned a salary. John did not like the idea of word getting around that he paid off the guard and that he would now need a budget increase to cover payoffs to *Regalón* and other guards.

At least he would be in court for the next five days and might well avoid having to pay more through until next Saturday. John was thus finding prison more abhorrent than ever before. What’s worse, he had conducted no church meeting since Aaron was called to work outside of 118. So John read Psalms 4, 43, and 121, then sang a couple of hymns and prayed alone. He would have still had the benefit of attending the Historic Baptists Zoomcast that afternoon had Valentín not called it off due to unforeseen ministry requirements.

So John read further than planned in the *Black Book of Communism* and killed a bunch of flies. He also played a game of chess with Rubén, whom he defeated. There was little peace back in the cell with Manuel, who was inconsiderately blasting annoying music from his boom-box. John just held his peace. He was glad to have gotten to speak yesterday with his wife, his son David, and a couple of friends. Now, the rest of his day entailed eating a leftover slice of pizza, salad, and quesadillas, along with an evening “shower” and maybe watching some movie about spies or organized crime before bedtime, preparing himself to be shackled early the next morning and taken to trial.

Chapter XVII

Until His Neighbor Comes and Examines Him

Week #2 of John's trial

Day six was unpleasant all around. Manuel had a habit of throwing garbage in the toilet, and the day before had partially clogged it. John pulled out the used Coronavirus mask, but it remained slightly clogged. John was up first the next day, and of course, the toilet did not flush well even though John threw his used toilet paper in the trash bag. Bipolar Manuel freaked out. John tried to explain that he did not do it but that the trash Manuel had thrown in did. The diatribe began about how John was never wrong. Manuel had to work it since John had to go to trial, with the humiliating “lift your testicles” routine and a rebuke from a power-hungry *gendarme* at the court.

During the morning, Manuel had John booted out of the cell with his newer cell phone apparently stolen by the movers. He was then sent to the upper bunk in Mauricio's cell. John fell on the television while climbing down from bed, breaking it. Pamela, whom Manuel had manipulatively called with the bad news, had tried to undermine her husband's character and actions. He wanted to ensure that the final payment for his cell infrastructure was made before John got back. She made it so: 70,000 pesos sent. By the time John was able to call her, it was too late to stop the transfer. Manuel had won. And now she had to transfer another 120,000 pesos to Mauricio to pay for the television. John had forgiven a small loan to Mauricio, made while in 109. He did the same for the food he bought him there. John had never charged him for either those items or the food he bought and shared together in 118.

Furthermore, John never pressed Mauricio to recompense John in part for when Castro stole his cell phone due to Mauricio's carelessness. Yet now John had to pay full price for Mauricio's television. That event spoke volumes about Mauricio's true character. John suffered a wounded left hip and leg, aching right lower leg, and somewhat bloody underarm, but none of that concerned Mauricio, John's “friend.” The top bunk only gave John eight inches between his face and the ceiling. Moving about was difficult.

The next day he would be moved again to some surprise location to be dealt with after trial. It would likely be unpleasant. Manuel had the gall to call John late that night (but not on John's other stolen phone, since John always removed the chip and its chip adapter/carrier and hid them separately, rendering the phone useless) and tell him it was all his fault, saying he was justified because in his mind John thought he was superior to others, which, he said, might be true outside but not inside the prison. Of course, John thought no such thing but did congratulate Manuel on succeeding in doing John so much harm, and then said goodbye. There was no reviling, nor any further argument made, other than suggesting that he seek medical counsel for obsessive-compulsive disorder and bipolar 1, after considering the carnage of so many ruined relationships inside and outside the prison for years. Saying more was not worth it. Manuel obviously appreciated little that John did, even though in his mania phase three days earlier, he had said that John was the best cellmate he had ever had. Hence, it was a bad day outside of court.

Nevertheless, in court, things were not so bad, yielding a slender net win. Molina and his crying, live-in girlfriend, eleven years his senior, gave confused and contradictory statements. Hers were

emotion-laden. Yet her fear of seeing the crowd (prior to the shooting) was good for John since it bolstered his claim about fearing for his life. Molina pieced together conflicting information about when and where the shots were taken. He was confused.

Neither of them heard the first round of shots or any expletives, but they heard, “He has a gun!” and both then heard two or three shots. He said the shots were aimed at the beach rather than his parked car. He said he was only 8 or 9 meters from John when the experts placed him at 52.4 meters away. She said that she was close enough to see John clearly, and Molina could tell John had a pistol that was not a revolver. He said the radiator hole was the size of an index finger when it was closer to twice that size. Guillermo said that neither witness added much of anything to the case against John, as they did not even claim that he shot at them to kill them.

The 35-year-old criminality expert was a different story. He painted a case, obviously planned out with the district attorney, to counter other experts and say that Ahumada was hit by a direct shot from 3.4 meters away rather than a ricochet at closer range. He also had drawings showing that John intended to shoot Molina but just missed badly, ending up in a ricochet. He said, too, that none of the shots were dissuasive and that the *carabineros* do not use such shots ever. His measurements and angles were questionable, and his ballistics training dubious as well (since he was a jack-of-all-trades and master of none). He did not seem to realize that John was ducking rocks thrown at him and fending off other assailants when the shots were fired that he claimed were intended for Molina. Guillermo said he had an hour’s worth of questions for this expert, which would start the next day of trial.

Day seven was a significant win in court, and the first day that another *reo*, Richie (27), accompanied him on the ride to the courthouse, John shared his lunch with him, too. He had been in prison for short sentences as a thief but now was looking at up to ten years for robbery with intimidation using a knife.

In court, things were far more interesting than chatting it up with a criminal, with Guillermo destroying the report of criminalist Delgado, who had testified the day before. It was remarkable to watch as the expert was shown to be incompetent, using made-up measurements and values in creating bullet trajectories. He did not know how high the curb was or that a bullet fragment still remained in Ahumada’s upper leg. He knew nothing about Molina saying he was only eight or nine meters away from John when he shot, with his girlfriend concurring. He did not do an analysis or know how old the car was and did not have a photograph of the exit hole. He relied on Guzmán’s work instead of doing his own research from scratch, just like the following witness would do. He did not see the videos, and after Guillermo played the videos for him, he could not identify Molina’s car parked anywhere while John was shooting. He did not even personally interview Ahumada, Molina, or other relevant people. Guillermo also out-lawyered Oliva with a long series of objections to his questions for the first two experts that basically shut him down.

The second witness was *carabinero* Sergeant Cesar, who basically backed all that Guzmán said, including the idea that Ahumada was hit by a ricochet, was also beaten up by Améstica for measurement errors, like knowing the heights of shooter and “victim” inaccurate distance from the pedestrian crossing to the back of the pickup truck (affecting the ricochet calculation), incongruence with the video evidence (which he mostly never saw), and lack of original research

or watching the videos. He did not even know if John shot through an open window or an open door. He knew he was sitting in the car as he shot. At least he provided some useful measurements like the width of the parking area where Molina says he and another car squeezed in, and would this have been out of line-of-sight of John, who was too busy ducking incoming rocks to be singling-out Molina's car either 9 or 52 meters away. He made a long clarification and explanation, too, regarding the unpredictability of trajectory if the bullet strikes a pavement defect or pothole (which he confirmed seeing many such roadway imperfections in Reñaca), a rock, or the curb.

The investigative police detective Peirano said that he saw police officers and military (both in uniform) and paddy wagons, contradicting earlier testimony. He also confirmed people were drinking and bringing bottles of booze and six-packs of beer. He said that John cooperated with the investigation completely, inviting the police in and giving them his guns, and did not wash his hands to remove nitrates or other gunshot residues. A chemical expert confirmed that some metal scraps found in the gearbox tested positive for copper or barium and lead, which could be the remains of a bullet. It was a good day in court, and being back at 118 was not as bad as he had imagined. Silva was definitely gone, and his replacement basically told John to live with Delfín (84) in a cell within the sickly prisoner area of 118A, with no shower and a window covered only with plastic and a blanket, a setup that let the cold in.

John reluctantly took the new room assignment, and Sergio and Carlos helped him move his stuff over. The *gendarme* was concerned about John's fall the previous night and, accordingly, his new bed was much lower and the cell larger: 3 meters × 3 meters (but lacking shelving, a toilet seat, and a way to heat food). Indeed, it was quite cold at night, and putting up with Delfín's extra-loud television was annoying. Still, John thought he could rough it for ten days until the trial was over.

Day eight started out differently. The inspection by the *gendarmes* of John's clothes was less stringent than usual, and two *machucados* from 114 accompanied him to the Viña courthouse in the sixteen-passenger paddy wagon with padded seats. They were convicts heading back to court for some drunk driving add-on charge. On the way back, Christian (27, of obvious Norwegian extraction, as he confirmed) joined them. He was caught with 580 grams of pot (80 grams over the misdemeanor limit) that he sold to support himself and his sick father. He was a musician and cook who had not been able to work for months due to Coronavirus restrictions imposed by the state. He served three years in the army and, therefore, would be coming to 118, hoping to be sent to home arrest soon.

Word was going around that no one in the *módulo* wanted to live with John. His wife initially took that reality as a negative, thinking poorly of her husband. But why would an imprisoned yet typically unrepentant child rapist, murderer, thief, drug trafficker, etc., want to live with John? Indeed, it would be worse if many of them wanted to do so. Pamela realized that John was right. John's strong religious convictions and practice, lack of vices, along with some admitted imperfections in cell cleaning offset by his generosity, unwillingness to lie when necessary, and lack of letting others control him completely made him an unattractive cellmate. He was a fish out of the water and, on top of that, an intellectual person, which few of them could fully relate to or even grasp the ideas or experiences he would bring up. For the time being, he was stuck with Delfín, whose life was defined by television, poker, and checkers, and he asked Sergio to

tell Carlos that he needed the bed footer cut out and the small shelves and light he had to be reinstalled on the wall above his head.

Meanwhile, things at the tribunal were going reasonably well. Long-haired, chubby Sebastian Valdez was the surprise witness of the day, and both Guillermo and John were delighted with what he said. He was one of the seven or eight (by his count) protesters who formed the human barricade of John's pickup. When the truck lurched forward, he dove off to the driver's side (just as the others, too, dove out of the way). When John stopped several meters again ahead, Valdez said that about fifteen people had surrounded the vehicle yelling obscenities or insults, which had started seconds earlier when a vindictive few of them saw John's fluorescent yellow vest approaching the stoplight. Valdez himself grabbed John's door handle and opened John's door in order to confront him. When John took out his gun, Valdez backed off near the pickup bed to avoid injury (actually, John had pulled out his gun earlier, at the stoplight).

According to Valdez, John then put one foot on the ground and fired one or two shots (he was not sure how many), one of them was directed directly at Ahumada, who was on the other side of the truck nearer the beach, a feat nearly impossible with only one foot on the ground (although Valdez did not realize the geometric problem). He could not say how tall John was or what month the event took place. He said John fully extended his arms as he shot, showing that he knew how to shoot. Valdez said he was not Ahumada's friend but later went to the hospital where he met Ahumada's father, who informed him that Ahumada only had a minor wound and would be fine. Thus, John was aggressed by Valdez and others prior to shooting his first round.

The truth is that Ahumada was on the sidewalk off to the other side of the pickup, that John had shown his gun prior to lurching forward, stopping only after he had heard the odious mob screaming and crying out to kill him (which Valdez says he did not hear), firing twice toward the ground, without leaving his seat, when the lynch-mob closed in and tried to extract him by force. It was pure self-defense, and the ricochet that hit Ahumada was accidental. His second shot might have ricocheted and hit Molina's car, which was directly behind him; also, an accident. John intended to kill no one. He just wanted to repel the aggressors in the context of violent nationwide rioting.

Valdez was confused about some details, but he admitted to being one of the assailants, first in the human barricade, then as leader of the lynch-mob. He said that people just got together based on social media calls, even though he had never been to Reñaca beach before, and sang and danced. No one brought rocks (or other throwable, heavy debris) or piled them up. John had just ruined everyone's "peaceful" and fun afternoon at the beach. The violence was kicked off by John Valdez. His sister and teenage niece left once it began.

The two investigative police detectives, bilingual Beltran and Flores, were also a boon to John, the former confirming some of what John had said when he left the videoconference message for his son (and others) and also said that a clip could be loaded into a gun in two seconds, contradicting Guzmán. Guillermo still feared asking them if John was surprised or felt remorse for someone being injured, to John's chagrin. He may have been right. But both cops confirmed that John was calm, hospitable, and voluntarily cooperative. They also said his guns were in good condition. Pamela helped find some guns, Beltran noted.

One said that the housemaid (Nadia) was present, too. Neither one saw or found a yellow vest, and John was not wearing it when they came in. They both confirmed the presence of alcohol and human barricades and perhaps some violence at the beach group of 700 people (who had mainly arrived by city bus) prior to John's arrival, and that carabineros were present.

Guillermo thought they strongly debilitated carabinero Uribe's earlier testimony, who came to John's home with them, questioning John's attitude. The truth is that the relationship was so cordial that the detectives did not put handcuffs on John until they arrived at the station.

Gun club president and manager of the adjacent gun shop, Pablo Zavala, testified to the hours of operations of the club (closed on Sundays and holidays since 2007, which John did not know) and that members could buy unlimited quantities of rounds to shoot in the club and up to 3,000 rounds from the shop, per pistol, to take home per year, with no more than 5,000 rounds in total for all guns. The district attorney had made a big deal about John buying an assortment of rounds (totaling 500) a few days before the event. She did not know that this quantity was not exorbitant for a club member or sportsman. Moreover, these purchases were legal and followed regulations.

Pablo confirmed that he had seen John at the regulatory office of the carabineros on 2 Norte street in Viña del Mar, further confirming John's interest in complying with public gun policy. He could not recall if John participated in one of the pistol championships in 2019, where he won a medal for third place (which was true, and John had shot with double action due to a defect in his pistol that lacked a decocking lever). He at first said that the club stopped cleaning guns a couple of years earlier but later confirmed that instructor Jorge Corrales did clean and maintain guns until he left his employment in February 2020. He remembered that John Cobin was a club member who left the country but could not remember if he had transferred his two guns to John the week prior to the shooting incident.

Unfortunately, Guillermo did not enter John's medal, referee-signed target, and receipts for cleaning into evidence to jog Pablo's memory. But Guillermo said that no one was questioning John's expertise given his concealed weapons permits from the United States. Thus, the loss was not so great. John figured that with his liberty on the line, every bit helps, and there was no reason not to have had this evidence ready, especially when he had suggested doing so for many months. Despite this failing, Guillermo was once again a champion defender, using many objections to shut down Oliva and Díaz.

Finally, Matias Cisternas, the man who took the sworn statement of Matthew Merrick, the Englishman who John was going to meet at the beach that day, confirmed that Matt told him there was a pellet rifle seen behind John in his videos and that John was going to put in the yellow vest so Matt could identify him. (The district attorney had been hinting that the rifle behind John was an unregistered rifle.) The two men had never physically met, but Matt knew what John looked like from his videos. They were going to possibly go to the gun club. Matt had messaged John to tell him that things had gotten very violent at the beach and not to put on his yellow vest since the rowdy crowd was swelling, and he knew what John looked like. Matt was going to leave Reñaca.

John never replied and might not have received the message. Matt turned off his phone. Matt's testimony is important for establishing why John had a yellow vest on and why he opted for the

beach route after seeing the gun shop and club were closed. It was also important because it established that hundreds of people had arrived at the beach who were acting very violently.

Day nine was a raise-your-testicles, stick-out-your-tongue, and vomit-most-of-your-lunch day. The paddy wagon was again downgraded to the three-section model, and after going down alone, John came back with a woman in her compartment and Francisco (22) in his, a boy who already spent a year in jail in Santiago for armed robbery (acquitted when the witness did not show up), and now faced over ten years for possession of an assortment of unregistered guns. The witnesses at trial provided little new information not already available to both sides. Seeing Ahumada's bullet holes certainly produced unfavorable emotion, but no one is denying the injury but rather debating whether it was an accident. Moreover, their hole shapes favored a hit from a deformed bullet coming off a ricochet.

Mechanic Juan Díaz Morales made a case for an "external object," not necessarily a bullet, piercing the radiator and gearbox. Jaime Soto Herrera and Consuelo Osorio Roca, friends of Ahumada, again provided information about Ahumada being shot, which had been debunked by the video shown earlier. Jaime could not corroborate his story when reviewing the video evidence. They both claimed the beach atmosphere was peaceful and party-like. Both said John stepped out of the pickup with one foot, especially Jaime, who said John extended his arms and, from two meters away, shot Ahumada's leg. At least Jaime did place Ahumada at a different location, favoring Guillermo's theory (which is the truth). Both emphasized that Ahumada's injury was serious and that he required their assistance at his home for a few months. The ride to the hospital was harrowing and the service poor.

With this evidence, the district attorney closed her part of this round and released her unused witnesses (including Matthew and Pamela), with Ahumada's private attorney Oliva to be calling just one more witness the next day. Guillermo was confident and thought of releasing witnesses who were personal friends of John and not calling Matthew, who was released by the district attorney. They were not needed to win.

At the end of this day, the prosecutors had presented no significant evidence that John attempted to murder someone, other than Ahumada's lie-riddled testimony perhaps. They seemed to lose ground due to the disdain and aggression against John prior to the shooting being clear, the significant violence at the beach (and cops), the problems with the prosecutors' experts, John's voluntary cooperation with the cops, the ricochets, and some of the scientific tests were all working in John's favor.

They did not bring any evidence supporting the accusation that John was a racist, white supremacist, aggressor, fugitive from justice, or a libertarian state-hater that was a danger to society. None of that was brought up. Thus, some witnesses were no longer needed. The prosecutors almost seemed to be throwing in the towel on the attempted murder charges. Things were really looking up. Just a few more days of trial, and it would all be over. In the meanwhile, John was suffering from several bug bites obtained while he slept, likely *chinchas*.

Furthermore, Sergio gave the information John requested to Carlos about cutting the bed impediment so his feet could hang over the edge of the mattress. He still needed to install the small shelf and light. Progress in the new cell was being made even as John was ever more

optimistic about going home the next week, as the prosecutors' case weakened. He still had to get cleaning supplies and a way to take a shower since he was not around during *patio* time. Delfin would make an attempt to acquire them the next day. Without a heating element, John was settling for sandwiches he threw together.

Day ten, like the day before, featured John bound twelve hours in ankle chains and six in handcuffs linked to them. The power-loving *gendarme* sergeant was a little tough with John in the morning, putting all cuffs on extra tight, yielding a somewhat painful experience, but spared him the thorough body search. Only Boris (40) from *módulo* 10 accompanied John down to the courthouse, and the two shared John's lunch in one of its seven cages while waiting to leave in the afternoon (with *regalón* [spoiled] John using a plastic fork to eat, with both hands freed by ever-supportive *gendarmes*, while Boris held the foil tray between his grimy paws and lapped up the fish and mashed potatoes like a dog would). In jail, Boris cuts hair all day for free and only asks that his clients give him something from their *encomienda* sacks on Sundays. He said, "I get so much food that I do not need *any encomienda* from my family."

Outside, he is a professional thief. Stealing from others is what he does for a living. He has a house and lots of goodies to support his wife and three daughters, ages 9, 6, and 3. He had been caught red-handed by *carabineros* inside a vacation home owned by a Swedish family. He thought he could lower his sentence from seven years to eighteen months because no one was home (note: there is a big difference in the years spent in jail for this detail). Nonetheless, the judge said the fact that beds were in the house meant his sentence would be based on the higher penalty. He was already going to do three years for other crimes committed, so now he had ten, less the thirteen months spent awaiting trial.

On the way back, two chubby ladies were lodged in their section of the paddy wagon, and two young men joined Boris and John, Joaquin (20) who already spoke perfect *coa* and was just caught with five military-grade weapons, along with some nameless, spooky young man who was out of his mind and kept staring at John's eyes most of the trip back as if demon-possessed. The judge said that the former could buy a bail bond for two million pesos and be sent to home arrest, and Joaquin was going to try to see if his brother (already in jail) could pay it. The latter had beat up his mother. John let him know that such crimes were frowned upon in jail. Boris would have beat him to a pulp if not chained.

Once in the staging area, the cages outside the statistics section adjacent to 118, the looney kid took off and tried to escape from prison, leading to six *gendarmes* breaking a sweat while going after him, hitting him once they found him (as they did at the courthouse cells earlier) and literally throwing him back into the cage.

John was hoping that Guillermo would treat his three-stooges opponents in court the same way. Oliva's witness Nelson was another friend of Ahumada who added little to the case, repeating the same errors regarding the location of the players and how John got out and directly shot Ahumada. For instance, he placed Ahumada one meter behind the pickup lying on the ground. All this fantasy was once again refuted by the video evidence, to Nelson's chagrin. Nelson had brought his eight-year-old son to the beach, too, whom he said was terrified by what John did. Pamela wondered, "What kind of a father would bring his child to a political protest?" Nelson obviously told his tale under Oliva's direction in order to raise sympathy with the judges.

It was clear that both Oliva and the district attorney were focusing less on the attempted murder charge now, using this last witness to make a case for a maximum assault charge rather than a moderate one. Then Oliva ended his evidence-stage presentation, and Guillermo started his, spending the remaining hours on just one criminalistic expert witness, Claudio Antonio Muñoz Pérez. His report emphasized that Ahumada had lied about his whereabouts and was actually a principal aggressor (standing with arms raised smack dab in the middle of the road before John), that another aggressor had opened John's door, provoking him to shoot, and that John fired his second rounds while under attack by rock-throwing hooligans and modern-day barbarians, one of whom shattered his passenger window. He also pointed out that while John was pointing at that same scoundrel (then hiding behind a car), had he fired at that moment, he would have hit the buildings behind the assailant rather than the crowd or Molina's car.

The day ended early, with cross-examination being put off until Tuesday after the long weekend. Overall, the day was yet another victory for John as the judges seemed to be growing tired of the mendacious, lame arguments of Ahumada's cronies and weary of seeing the same son-of-abitch-kill-him and John-ducks-the-incoming-rocks videos. Guillermo was sure the judges understood the defense's core 'incomplete' self-defense argument.

Pamela, who was allowed to watch the trial via Zoom for the first time, was amused by John's clothing + accused yellow vest + white plastic bag combination. She later went to the grocery store, ordered an all-meat pizza for John to eat over the weekend, and prepared her *encomienda* sacks to bring John the next day. John looked forward to getting them and to be able to take a shower for the first time in five days. The bugs were still an issue, leaving John's now swollen arm in order to feast on his hip, although Boris said, "they eventually get tired of you and leave you alone." John was nonetheless happy to see that a little bottle of Clorox had arrived in order to disinfect the bathroom. He disdained both bugs and filth, albeit not as much as the lying witnesses, leftist lawyers, and district attorneys who had been falsely accusing him for nearly a year. They were worthy of hell.

One problem in Chile is that it is nearly impossible to arrest and prosecute a district attorney or a judge. There are no courts independent of the main body of courts, and to avoid conflicts of interest, no district attorney could prosecute another; the same thing is probably true of judges. One never heard of either bureaucratic species being prosecuted, even though there are many news reports of political bias, scandals, or illicit arrangements between judges and senators in Chile. There are also no juries to render independent judgments without the constraints of comradeship. The police are all tied in with these highly paid characters as well (district attorneys and judges earn six or seven million pesos a month and are thus in the top 0.5% of income earners in Chile). Indeed, it is hard to believe that people in this class could ever be arrested.

Miami had lots of stories to back this point. He and his wife would like to retire in Italy, and John often enjoyed speaking with him about his options. John knew Italy well. Apparently, he did not know Manuel well, however, who denied ever holding John's 18,000 pesos for safekeeping, making a scene from his window before everyone on the *patio*, calling John dishonest. Manuel was still a very troubled man, and now even a thief, too, although such behavior might be related to his illness and tendency to forget what he had done during his manic moments. John got his shower, used a bottle of Clorox on the floor and walls of the cell, shook

out mattresses and bedding, and sheets and clothes washed by Miami. His *encomienda* arrived, and a little bit of money was hidden inside. Somehow Pamela managed to get the *gendarmes* to let bug repellent and peanut butter in, too. Nothing in prison ever seemed to be certain.

Sergio informed him that Cabo Montecino was now in charge of 118. John had always got along with him, but he hoped his tenure would be short-lived. In the meantime, he had his Bible, and his wife had brought him Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* for entertainment. Even his health was capricious. He had fewer black spots before his right eye (as of the day before), but he could not tell if bugs were biting his abdomen and hips or if a rash was starting up again. Even his daily routine to eat, sleep, and get ready had been altered. John no longer did any cleaning of the *patio* bathroom, and he hoped no one would notice, even after using the shower stall. He now heated water in an electric tea kettle in his cell and mixed it with cold in a bucket. To bathe, he poured warm water over his head and body with a plastic jar. No matter; at least he was clean. Interestingly, not many were enthused that might be found mostly clean before the law. John was surprised that only Miami and Rubén, and perhaps Aaron, showed any real interest in details about how his case and trial were going. No matter, he figured, "Soon enough, I will never see any of these men again."

Rookie *gendarme* Poblete was in charge of 118 on Sunday and was fascinated watching John slaughter Rubén in three games of chess. He also talked with John at length about language and his trial, expressing how bad he felt for John having had to suffer so much for defending himself. (He seemed like a laid-back *paco*.) John was going to treat Aaron to pizza after the worship service, but Aaron seemed more interested in watching the poker game than thinking about the Lord. He used the somewhat loud music coming from across the *patio* in the barber room as an excuse for putting it off till later. Later never came, and John took a nap. By the time he awoke, it was already too late to start. John did get to participate with the historic Baptists Zoomcast later, at least. (And he ate all the pizza himself, too!) He went with Delfín to the infirmary (it was time for his shot) to get cream for his bedbug bites, but they had none. The paramedic gave him some pills instead.

John found and killed two *chinchas* on his bedspread and one near his arm. At any rate, he had to be thankful for his state of health, even if his blood pressure was 145/90 that afternoon. It was higher during the week, but Pamela had snuck in his medication yesterday, and his blood pressure was dropping. Sure, the bites itched, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to read due to the spots and splotches before his eyes (particularly in the bright sunlight).

Still, John's health could be worse. A *mozo* housed in 118 had died the day before from a heart attack while in his cell. John remembered his near-death experience with Covid-19 and pneumonia while all alone in 109. It was good to have a cellmate if one was sick. Delfín and John did not talk much with each other but seemed to get along fine. Delfín cleaned today, and John did so yesterday. Yet both hoped the relationship would end soon, with John being acquitted of some or all charges.

Accordingly, John would have to put together a list of his goods for sale and prices, just in case he got sent home this week directly from the courthouse. Miami agreed to be in charge of selling everything (John offered a 33% commission, which Miami refused to accept). John wanted to leave prison in earnest and ironically bided his time reading *Great Expectations*.

Monday was Columbus Day, a national holiday, but John believed that Manuel would still be working. He was, instead, in bed with his curtain drawn across his bunk when John entered his cell and looked in the *caleta* inside the shelving in order to verify that his cell phone was gone. It was. Then Manuel leaped up and told John that he should have knocked first. John, surprised, concurred and excused himself. He had asked permission of the young *gendarme* in charge of 118 that day if he could go up and get something left in his former cell. The guard said, “What’s that, your cell phone?” John replied, “Yes,” and permission was granted.

Obviously, that *gendarme* had different standards of conduct than Silva or even Castro and did not mind prisoners having cell phones. It was good to know since he probably had a price for just about anything John might need. If John was going to be in 118 for any time in the future, he would need to have a *gendarme* who he could pay to live alone in cell number 4 once Manuel finally left. Otherwise, Aníbal told him he would have to find someone who was willing to live with him.

Speaking of being alone, Miami corrected the story of the *mozo* that had died from a heart attack recently (Saturday). He had not, in fact, been living alone, but rather with Aníbal and Franco, and was due to be paroled that month. When he arrived at his quarters at 3:30 p.m., he was feeling bad, and when he passed out, his two companions failed to do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation or pump his chest, instead of taking him to the infirmary where the staff likewise failed to do the same. Hence, he expired. “Prisons are a death trap for sick people all the way around,” pondered John. One never knew what to expect anyway. For instance, Ismael, who had been so close to John for months, now would not respond or even look directly at John when John said, “good morning,” and John was puzzled as to why that might have been the case. “Something had definitely gone wrong with that man,” thought John.

Then smooth-talking Arturo approached John and asked him about salvation through Jesus Christ, noting that his aunt was an Evangelical and that he (a thief) would be paroled soon. He further affirmed that he was a sinner in need of a Savior, and John shared with him the simple faith and repentance required in the Gospel of free grace, noting that his life must change and depart from practicing sin as well as be characterized by practicing good works. Salvation was his for the taking whenever he wanted it: that moment, that night, or whenever through faith that Christ’s blood had cleansed him from his sins. Arturo, who for whatever reason was fascinated that John could read a book like *Great Expectations* in English, said he lived in Concón where John attended Grace Church.

So John gave him directions to the church and elders-in-training Jonathan and Felipe’s phone numbers, who could better orient him. He also gave him Valentín’s number to get connected with the Historic Baptists online Zoom group. Then Arturo asked John if the church would help him get a job and, given his experience with other criminals and prisoners like *Rufo*, Manuel, and even Ricardo, warned Arturo that he could expect no reward if he were feigning true faith in order to attain other benefits, but that if in fact he truly believed, of course, they would help him find a job. John had shared Christ or the Bible with many prisoners, but he doubted Arturo’s sincerity, yet still hoped for the best, on the one hand, trusting that the aforementioned men would deal with him prudently.

He himself, on the other hand, had his own demons to deal with. He had to be prudent with

bedbugs, which conto deal with. He had to be prudent with bedbugs, which con year friend Bert, had kindly made the decision to research the issue and found that bicarbonate, vinegar, and assorted easy-to-get chemicals (all prohibited in prison) would get rid of the bedbugs. She also found an article written by a physician who said that leaving mattresses and bedding out in the hot sun would do the trick, which John could do in 118 and did, hanging all his bedding on the lines. He then sprayed Raid on the metal bed rails. (Unfortunately, Delfín refused to let John take the mattresses off his [nearby] bunk bed, reducing overall effectiveness.) Sure enough, the bedbugs soon appeared on the sun-heated mattresses from upper (John's bed) and lower bunks, with Arturo squishing one and John eleven more. It was disgusting watching John's former blood being disgorged between their fingers.

Then John brought out the three prison-issued blankets in the cell and spread them out on the *patio*. Everyone could see the bedbugs infesting them, and Rubén and Miami directed John to roll them up and pitch the blankets (and taxpayer's money) in the garbage, which he did. No one wanted bedbugs, and all opined poor, old, stubborn Delfín for cohabitating with them. John was repulsed by the whole thing, and Miami passed him a bucket of chlorinated water that he doused the floor with (except under Delfín's bunk), and thus hoped he would be able to sleep well without becoming a bug banquet again.

The trial would continue the next day, and he wanted to be well-rested by the time they fetched him in the morning to chain him. He had already showered on the *patio*, Carlos had sewed his broken watchband, Sergio had brought his bottles of juice and flavored water (leaving pending for tomorrow bug bite cream and more juice, prepaid), and he had given Miami a list of things he would sell with prices paid should he not return. He was ready to go home at any moment during the week the court would let him. And now that quarantine had ended in Viña del Mar, moving around and getting resettled would be much easier.

Chapter XVIII

And Then the End Will Come

Week #3 of John's trial

Day eleven was more of the same, mostly positive for John. There was a little bit of weakness in anthropologist Dr. Gabriel Salinas San Martín's expert testimony, and some in ballistics expert Osvaldo Faunes Peña's for the measurements he used (which were ordered by, and later criticized by, the same district attorney), but even they had more points in John's favor overall. The former provided a reason for John's reaction based on his upbringing in America and why he would naturally be interested in groups dedicated to self-defense when the state failed to protect its citizens. He emphasized the second-amendment culture in the United States and his familiarity with firearms from his youth, which was later reinforced by church groups that promote safe gun use. He added that such intrinsic traits are difficult to change even when one migrates to another country. His reaction might be strange for Chile but perfectly normal for the United States.

The desire to protect his property and defend his neighbors is innate; it is not the territorialism of a criminal like a drug trafficker but rather the practice of virtue in community service. John came to Chile with a "messianic complex" that, because of Pinochet and the Chicago Boys, the Chilean economic model had become an iconic example for the rest of the world. He also noted that if John had wanted to kill someone that day, then they would have been dead since he knew how to use his gun. Oliva tried unsuccessfully to use the expert to link John with racist groups and discuss his view of communists. The latter propounded that all of John's shots ricocheted off the ground, and Ahumada was standing both before and after he was hit.

Witness Fauna noted that it is impossible to predict the trajectory of a ricochet because it depends on many factors, including the type of material impacted, amount and quality of gunpowder, etc. He said that even over a short distance, the ricochet that hit Ahumada was possible. He also went to some lengths to show why John was adept with firearms use and had been for at least seventeen years, based on his concealed carry credentials from the United States.

The legal, medical expert (physician Sebastián González) was a fantastic plus for John, showing why Ahumada's injury had to be caused by a ricochet, both for the angle derived from the entry and exit wounds and because the projectile fragmented (with a chunk still remaining in Ahumada's leg). Moreover, he confirmed that the injury was not very serious based on his time in the hospital and the light medication prescribed (thus carrying a much lower potential sentence). The witness from Friday, Muñoz, held his own under cross-examination, showing Ahumada to be a liar. The district attorney tried to discredit him by insinuating that he did not include all relevant information and that he got illicit information from John's attorney regarding other witnesses' testimony. She did not succeed; he kept pointing out that what she said was lacking was outside the scope of his study.

Guillermo was positive overall. Despite some weaknesses here and there, the case for John had advanced. He was thinking about not bothering calling the last personal witnesses. The trial was going to be over by Friday. He took a firm strategy that John was not entirely comfortable with

since he accepted the fiction that John only fired once the first time and the other gunshot was a rock hitting his truck hard (making a greater case for self-defense), and saying the shot at the beach (that did not occur) was shot over the heads of people safely landing in the sea. One of the long shots when John was out of the vehicle ducking incoming rocks accidentally hit Molina's radiator and gearbox, another fiction. John wanted to prove that the car probably was not hit by a bullet, and even if it were, it would have been at the first stop as John's car door was opened. Guillermo thought it would be easier to win the fictional case set up by the district attorney.

Looking at the logistics of it, John's trip up and back was the best yet, without a body search in the morning and no paddy wagon company in either direction. At the courthouse basement, a young man detained in an adjacent cell, who claimed that he was in Reñaca that day, started hitting the cage and screaming threats and curse words at John in both English and Spanish. The *gendarmes* told him several times to shut up and gave the thumbs up to John as they walked by. They were not siding with some communist scumbag. While John sang some hymns, the guy mocked him, just as he did while walking by John's cage on his way to court. His hatred for John was visceral and was fueled by John laughing at what he said. The *gendarmes* wanted John to simply ignore the nut from that point forward, and he did. There is nothing to look forward to for anyone stuck in this process, but at least in John's case, the trial and disagreeable trips were soon coming to an end.

Day twelve was a raise-your-testicles (John began wondering if this particular repeat-offender guard was into seeing male genitalia) and vomit-some-of-your-breakfast day. The paddy wagon was the three-section model, and John went down to the courthouse alone and came back with Luís (30), nabbed for illegally carrying a gun. He was in the adjacent compartment, so John did not speak much to him.

In court, Guillermo only called one witness, and she dealt a knockout punch to the prosecution. Valeria Catalina Silva Guzmán was found by criminalist Claudio, and she was a gem. She worked as a cashier at one of the *empanada* shops about fifty meters from where the human barricade took place. She did not agree with what John did (only John and his lawyers knew that fact), and so she was a completely disinterested party, a factor that added considerably to John's case. Her favor helped John tremendously, and she testified for well over two hours. The district attorney was beside herself the whole time and even got into some heated conversations with judge Alonso Arancibia over her poor questions.

Valeria stated that *flaites* (low-class people who speak poorly) announced their intention to come to Reñaca, which they never do, scaring the locals. By 11 a.m., they were pouring in, mainly by local bus, bringing beer and waiting in a long line to buy from Reñaca's liquor store near to where she worked. Shortly thereafter, they were drunk and rowdy. More continued to flow in, and she said the majority were drunken. The police force was gathering, too, near the Santa Isabel supermarket and the Mackay school. These people were already talking about looting stores and burning things down, among other destructive acts, long before John arrived, and Valeria overheard them commenting about their plans to get the "f^*#ing fascists" (which meant right-winger and, apparently, libertarian).

All this happened before John arrived on the scene. When he did come by, she heard some of them point out John, by then driving to the turnaround (with a few cars ahead of him) and insult

and curse him for having his fluorescent yellow vest on. She and her boss shut down their store and went to watch what was happening closer to the beach. She stated that people were rocking John's truck and that he softly braked then accelerated with a thrust that required the people to get out of the way without injury. When John stopped a few meters ahead, many people followed after, and one threw a beer bottle at his truck while others beat it with their fists. Next, she said someone opened the driver's door intending to "lynch" John, at which time he fired a shot. By *lynch*, she meant "beat him up badly and destroy his truck." He then drove off at least 120 meters, and she saw nothing else that happened since she and her boss returned to secure the store. The people were threatening and yelling insults at John before he shot.

She provided evidence that John did not provoke the destruction of Reñaca, but instead, the *flaites* had come with that intention. The district attorney tried in vain to trip her up or twist her words and story under cross-examination, including making her define what a *flat* is, even asking for an example. Valeria provided one. They reused a pickup receipt in order to scam the store out of 15,000 pesos of *empanadas*. The district attorney was getting nowhere trying to defend *flaites*. Lagos hardly tried to ask her a few things, and Rita Diaz asked her nothing.

The damage to the prosecution was tremendous, confirming that John was attacked and defended himself rather than attempted to murder someone, and he was not responsible for the destruction of the town. Guillermo decided to end on a high note and call no further witnesses, not even Matt (who would add little new information after hearing Valeria). He told John that all was on track as planned and that they were ready for closing arguments the next day. He said that he was confident that John would be cleared of the attempted murder charges and of any responsibility for the destruction of Reñaca, but that he would still be convicted of some lesser charges. John's cousin Dan had been pressing him to make some final statement of remorse, which sounded good to John.

Nevertheless, the public defender team led by Guillermo strongly recommended against doing so since it would be counterproductive to the core defense argument that John had fired toward the ground and thus had nothing to be sorry for. He further said that John should make no closing remark whatsoever when asked. It made no difference if the judges knew something more about John or who he was. Guillermo had enough evidence to win; everything else would just detract from that reality. John finally agreed. Guillermo was the professional, after all, with experience, whereas John was hardly an amateur.

They went over John's basic defense together and agreed on the concepts. Drunk, and often bad, people insulted John because of what he wore, assailed his truck, and corralled him in. When he showed them his gun, they got violent and increased their attack, shooting once at his car or throwing something loud at it that sounded like a gunshot, and when they opened his door with the intention to drag him out and harm him and his vehicle. John then fired a shot toward the ground to dissuade the aggressors, which unfortunately ricocheted and hit Ahumada in the leg by accident, although lying Ahumada was one of the chief aggressors.

John had stopped shortly past the stoplight because he could hear them saying things like "Son of a bitch, kill him" before he fired his gun. He feared for his life and stopped when he thought he saw some people reaching for their pistols and to evaluate the damage to his truck. After firing his first shot, he drove another 80 meters ahead and got out for the same reason (confirmed in his

rear-view mirror). He scanned the distant crowd, pointing his pistol at them, and when no firearms were seen, he started to get back in his truck. Once again, people closed in on him and attacked him by throwing rocks, causing John to turn back and defend himself, ducking incoming rocks and firing dissuasively, downward, toward one perpetrator who had gotten close. One of these shots ricocheted and possibly accidentally hit Molina's radiator.

John then drove off, and as he was about to, the young man shattered the passenger-side window, from which he supposedly shot once over the heads of the beachgoers into the sea. All shots were fired in self-defense against wild, drunken hooligans with designs on harming John. Hence, the defense team was ready to make its closing arguments and respond to those of the four prosecutors. The hearing ended at noon, and John spoke to Guillermo for a few minutes after that, waiting in the basement jail cell for a couple of hours. John got back early enough to get the *gendarme's* permission to take a shower. It was a relatively good day.

Day thirteen featured a *gendarme* who made John strip down and even turn his socks inside out. He rode down to the courthouse alone and spent time in the holding cell with Bastián (22), who had been caught with nine kilograms of compressed marijuana. John got better acquainted with a nice *gendarme*, Felipe Cifuentes, who had been acquitted of drug trafficking and illegal gun sales. He was suspended and fought the charges in court for a year, maintaining his right to remain silent as John was doing. He eagerly followed John's trial and thought Guillermo was winning by keeping his consistent line versus the questionable and varied line on the other side. He kept John's cuffs loose and never looked over John's shoulder as he typed. On the way back, John was accompanied by three thieves who threatened a person bearing valuable perfume while robbing him and dropping off a youngster (maybe a teenager) at the Limache prison along the way. John got back late to 118 and suffered eleven hours in ankle chains, seven of them linked to handcuffs.

The day in court was remarkable, with Guillermo pulling out a surprise clause from the exculpatory section of the law (chapter 10, paragraph 11) that he claimed superseded the section on legitimate defense and thus justified John's shots. Furthermore, he argued for "perception of danger" as the overriding principle of the case. He cited key points of evidence to eliminate both charges of attempted murder, the charge of John starting the riot that destroyed Reñaca, and the charge of firing a gun in public without justification (stating that all four shots were all in fact justified), leaving a simple charge of not-too-serious wounding of Ahumada, likely entailing less than six months jail time. A key point had to do with the fragment of the bullet left in Ahumada's leg, which proves a ricochet occurred since no bone was hit that could have busted it. That ricochet shows that Ahumada was neither shot directly nor intentionally.

The prosecutors relied on their arguments that were seriously questioned in the evidence round, plus lots of unfounded speculation. For instance, the district attorney said that John lied by saying he had dual citizenship because he renounced his American citizenship, but she did not bother to find out if John also had another citizenship besides Chilean, which he clearly does. She kept saying that a gun is loaded if the non-inserted clip is full of bullets, that bullets must be left in their box until used at the club's range, that legally buying 500 assorted rounds according to established norms is sinister, that covering his truck's license plate meant that he was trying to conceal his whereabouts from the police when in fact he was concealing it from the criminals who attacked him and had no idea the police were coming, that he spoke in English in his public

declaration to hide something while the police were in his home rather than because it made his conversation private, that he cleaned his pistol when he returned when in fact he did not do so, that he washed his hands to eliminate residues when he did not do so, that he chose the scenic beach route home when he knew there was a multitude there when he did not know and had seen no social media reports saying so.

John wanted to at least deny all these allegations without basis, but Guillermo said not to since it would only raise their legitimacy beyond what they deserved. But John was concerned because the majority of the prosecution's case was based on such errant conjecture. He also said the same about remorse, which John was about to declare when the judge asked him if he had anything to add. Guillermo asked John to trust him and tell the judge, "No," without adding any other details or denials. John paused several seconds but, in the end, figured Guillermo knew what he was doing, at least more than he did, so he complied. Guillermo also neglected to state a few things that, in turn, worried John. For example, he did not say that if John really had fired out his window toward the beach full of people, it would have been easy for an experienced gun user like John to aim over their heads and shoot a bullet safely into the ocean. He did not point out that John had two easy shots at Molina's car prior to shooting under a hail of incoming stones, the first when Molina was right behind him at the stoplight and the second when he was scanning for pistols, pointing his gun as he did. He did not state that John retreated in stages instead of running in panic and exposing his back to potential gunfire. He did not state that John did not know that the gun club was closed or that he went to meet Matthew Merricks on the beach. He did not state the police did not ask him to turn in his ammunition or his yellow vest. It would have been so easy simply to deny all these things, along with Olivia's outlandish and baseless claims that John was a racist and hateful, or his ignorant one declaring that the 40-caliber is a military-grade round that is lethal, compared to the nine-millimeter round that can just wound people.

What Guillermo did well was to cite many laws in John's favor and keep a consistent line of defense, whereas the prosecutors built their arguments on conflicting reports and witnesses caught in lies. The district attorney opined that John maintained silence and left her with no opportunity to prove his intentions. Guillermo said that, like Molina's girlfriend, John was afraid and found no easy way to drive out safely. He showed this fear of danger led John to fire dissuasively, regardless of the fact that cops never do so, noting that John was not a cop nor trained in their ways. He was in imminent danger and acted accordingly to avoid harm. His yellow vest no more justified aggression against him than seeing a person wearing a University of Chile soccer uniform justifies aggression against the one wearing it by those who hate that team. Olivia's argument that no proof was offered that John owned guns in the United States was ignored, even though it could have been shown that John brought his guns down from America, including the one used that affected Ahumada and Molina.

For Guillermo, these details were minor. All that mattered was to create a reasonable doubt that John wanted to kill someone that day and to find a way to say his shots were *justified*. Guillermo was quite sure of himself and that he had won the day. Hence, John submitted himself to Guillermo's judgment and kept silent, making no closing statement. The judges were deliberating the arguments and evidence and would arrive at a verdict the next day. In the meantime, John had to pack up things in the cell since Delfín said that it would be fumigated tomorrow. News had spread in 118 about the bedbugs.

Chapter XIX

The Devil Is About to Throw Some of You into Prison

The last day of John's trial

Day fourteen was an unexpected disaster. John was found guilty of attempting to murder Ahumada, of the unjustified firing of his gun in public, and of a reduced crime of intending to attempt to murder Molina. Afterward, Guillermo was asking for home arrest for an overall sentence of under five years (based on mitigating factors), while the district attorney wanted jail for over ten years. The specific sentence would be rendered on Sunday the 25th, Election Day, when Chileans would vote whether or not to write a new constitution. Given the arbitrary decision that was reminiscent of Stalin's show trials, ignoring evidence of the ricochet and discounting the lies of John's assailants, John had lost hope of prevailing one day and was hoping to secure a way to serve his term in Italy, where he was a citizen. He had spoken to the Italian proconsul and their lawyer in 2019 about doing so.

Guillermo talked about appeals and options, but John could not imagine justice being done in Chile, whereas the Italians might modify the ruling following their law. John doubted that Italy's legal system would be tremendously better, but he was now convinced that the rule of law did not exist in Chile. All was going his way for thirteen days of court, but honest onlookers saw that the decision ignored evidence and skirted the law, making it more similar to arbitrary and capricious rule than an example of a fair trial overseen by objective and impartial judges. People on the Right were furious with the ruling, which seemed so out of proportion with reality and evidence, and moreover, so obviously biased. John clearly had no hope of prevailing from the day he set foot in the courtroom. He himself was too furious with the injustice he faced to be sad or depressed. His wife and son David, not to mention his friends, likewise doubted that Chile was a good place to live due to its broken legal system.

Nevertheless, the day did not start out so badly. *Gendarme* Espinoza did not search John or *mozo* Ariel Gamboa (30) prior to chaining them, which had been a sign of good things to come for John, who, expecting a significant chance of going home, had hidden his phone chip in his clothing and some money in the sole of his shoe that might have been found on other days. The *gendarmes* at the courthouse presumptuously celebrated that John would soon be sent home, the same people who later would be cursing the injustice of Chilean justice and asking John if his choice to come to Chile was not one of the worst of his life. If the *gendarmes* were his judges, John would have been completely acquitted. But they were not. John's weary thoughts drifted toward Italy, and Pamela was likewise no longer sure that Chile was a good country to live in, having a judicial system overrun by ideological mafiosos.

Ariel was a professional thief facing another fifteen years for robbery with violence on top of the eight years (hitting a guard in defense of his wife as they left the Líder (WalMart) store they just stole from) he had served since age eighteen for theft and robbery. He said that crime like theft mostly paid, where he could "earn" so much from robbing stores (houses, too, earlier in his life) and only face sixtyone days in jail for each theft event wherein he was caught. He had, accordingly, been convicted and sentenced for eighteen separate incidents of theft, each carrying a onemonth sentence on average. He was *mozo* of disciplinary *módulo* 112 where he said all *reos*

had televisions and cell phones, and where pleasant, corrupt guards were paid with small gifts of food to look the other way.

Those same guards added as much as ten million pesos to their monthly salaries through selling drugs, food, cell phones, televisions, and other goods to inmates. Like in other parts of the prison, *machucados* made money by scams with their cell phones, including the aforementioned sexy connections with supposedly underage girls, as well as extortion through telling people they had won prizes or contests and needed to deposit some down payment to claim their winnings. He got along well with John, even boasting about John as the *pistolero de Reñaca* to the two lesbian inmates who accompanied them back to jail that afternoon.

People from 118, both *reos* and *pacos*, seemed dejected by John's sad report, and Delfín had already seen the news on television, which was a top story on all channels, and wherein John continued to be mistakenly referred to as an American citizen. Meanwhile, outside the prison, there was social strife and rioting carried out by thousands of leftists and other malcontents. Social chaos was starting up once again.

John was wiped out over the weekend. Many *reos* and *gendarmes* were surprised and felt bad for John on account of the injustice hurled at him. John decided to turn to social media and the press in Chile and abroad to plead his case, and many sympathetic people helped him do so. The following items were spread widely (in English: and a poor Spanish version using Google translate).

John's statement regarding his criminal conviction

This is Dr. John Cobin.

The three-week trial ending on October 16, 2020, wherein I was unjustly convicted of attempted murder, revealed and clarified many points of evidence, such that the whole story of what happened in Reñaca, Chile, on November 10, 2019, is now apparent. The combined testimony showed that a drunken, rowdy, low-class crowd, celebrating before undertaking their planned destruction of Reñaca, became inflamed and enraged as I approached in my pickup truck. Why? Because I was wearing a fluorescent yellow vest. The prosecutor said I intentionally provoked the mob by what I wore, much as a woman in a bikini provokes a rapist or a man wearing the jersey of his favorite sports team provokes the assailant who likes another. As my truck passed, a witness said that insults like, "f^*ing fascist" were heard. Then seven or eight people took hold of my bumper upon reaching the stoplight, blocking my free transit, and rocking and hitting my pickup. In order to repel them, I loaded my legally registered and transported pistol and showed it to them, so they knew I would not tolerate being assaulted. They had been chanting something I could not understand, but then everything changed, and some yelled, "He has a gun," and, as heard in one video of the incident, "Son of a bitch; kill him!" To escape, I lunged my pickup forward, and the barricaders jumped out of the way. Several meters ahead, I stopped again after seeing in my rear-view mirror what I thought were men reaching for concealed guns. They did say, after all, that they were going to kill me, and the only weapon that would permit them to do so while I was in a vehicle driving away was a gun. Thus, I decided to retreat in two stages. While stopped, the angry mob surrounded my vehicle, beating it. One witness testified that a Becker's beer bottle was hurled at my pickup.

The overall attack sounded like thunder from inside the cab. Then, Sebastián Valdez opened my door (as he testified in court), with the likely intention of pulling John out of the pickup truck and (with others' help), as one eyewitness testified, "lynch" John. I heard the impact of a gunshot, also heard in some videos of the event. At that moment, I had little choice but to rotate my body (while seated) and fire a shot toward the ground in order to dissuade and repel the assailants and escape.

I then drove another 60 meters or so and, still fearing for my life, got out of my pickup as the second stage of my retreat, in order to scan, with my pistol drawn, the crowd for armed people, in order to ensure that no one was taking aim at me. None were, and thus I started to get back in my truck to leave the scene when other assailants arrived, raining large rocks down upon me. With one of them close in on me, only a few meters away, and with a street corner and buildings in the background, I fired two more shots downward to repel the attacker. Then, as I got in my truck and drove off, he ran up and smashed my passenger window. I then drove off to safety. I never aggressed anyone since doing so runs contrary to my Baptist and libertarian principles. Each time I fired was in reaction to being attacked, based on how I had learned in the United States not to panic but to use force prudently in order to save my life. Now, it seems, in order to promote the ambitions of a few judges pressured by people who hate me because they think differently than me, I have unjustly lost my liberty for many years.

Supporting theory

This is Dr. John Cobin.

On October 16, 2020, I was convicted of crimes I did not commit, nor did such acts enter into my mind. I was convicted without any evidence being presented, proving my intent to kill someone. I had two clips for my pistol with a total of 20 shots available, and if I had so chosen, given my proficiency with it, I could have killed 20 people. But I did not do so. The dissuasive shot I fired ricocheted and (regrettably) hit Luis Ahumada by accident. It was fired, according to the PDI and carabinero police forces, from just one to four meters away. I have been using guns for thirty-five years, trained to legally carry concealed for over a decade. Do you really think that at such a close range, I would have missed Ahumada's head or vital organs, either by shooting at the ground or his thigh instead? The forensic witness specializing in medical-legal matters noted at trial that the bullet followed an ascending trajectory through the thigh and split into two fragments without hitting a bone, proving that Ahumada was hit by a ricochet.

I did not attempt to murder Ahumada, a man who lied under oath and who actively participated in the aggression against me. He was front-and-center in the human barricade that blocked my advance on November 10, 2019, attacking my pickup truck while I was inside it, demonstrated by his own testimony and the videos seen at trial. Yet please do not think that my lawyers failed in their duty to demonstrate these facts and others. They suffer from a romantic or quixotic view of the state and its judicial arm. According to public choice theory, judges, like presidents, legislators, and bureaucrats, serve their own interests instead of the public interest. Did the nature of President Piñera, a notoriously successful capitalist, change after he was elected so that he now serves the public interest rather than his own? So it is with judges, such as those who wrongfully convicted me: Carlos Correa, Viviana Poblete, and Alonso Arancibia. You might ask, "What more do they need? They are already among Chile's top earners, making 7 million pesos (9,000 USD) per month." Nevertheless, money is not everything, and judges also seek

greater prestige or power, greater social influence, a higher bench on a superior court, a larger staff or budget, and to leave their mark on history without being caught up in corruption or scandal. Only very rarely will a judge forgo obtaining such achievements in order to save an innocent man or to avoid unjust rulings, especially when under extreme public scrutiny of social pressure. The last thing they want to do is row upstream when the apparent majority of the public, albeit lacking all the evidence, has determined that I am guilty. Accordingly, my lawyers did not fail in either their legal theory or strategy. They failed in their economic and social theory, believing that self-interested judges would be able to overcome social pressure and/or their personal biases in order to render impartial, objective decisions. Even if the three judges who ruled against me are not evil or corrupt, they cannot escape their human nature and self-interested drives, no matter how vociferously they proclaim their own virtue to the contrary.

Declaration of John's suffering

I have already paid a high price for what happened in Reñaca on November 10, 2019, a cost that would never have been able to imagine in my worst nightmares. Over the course of the last year, I have lost 40 million pesos (50,000 USD) in income and nearly all my savings outside my AFP (private social security) account. Obviously, once I leave prison, I will have to look for a new job; no employer, no matter how brilliant an employee may be, can be expected to hold a position open for so long. I have been falsely accused of being racist, a white supremacist, a fugitive of justice sought by Interpol, and a psychopathic aggressor. Hence, I now must defend my morality and reconstitute my reputation. I live in poor, even inhumane conditions with rats, bedbugs, and other biting or otherwise annoying insects and spiders. I have been locked up for eighteen hours a day and the remaining six in a small concrete yard, along with child rapists, thieves, murderers, and drug traffickers, who represent precisely the kinds of people whom I have never related beforehand. Can you imagine for seven months (during the Covid-19 quarantine) not having an intellectual or sentimental conversation? Or that the only people in which I can "trust" and with whom I can speak, are men who are criminals, nearly all without higher education, who often speak poorly in a Spanish dialect that is not easily understood, wherein after so many months, unfortunately, are known to me better than some of my own friends? Obviously, it is neither natural nor healthy to be prevented from communicating with those whom I enjoy being with.

I have suffered two assaults by criminals in prison, one of them with a knife. My prior cellmate apparently suffers from mental disorders that led him to behave in an obsessive-compulsive and bipolar manner (for which he took no medication), making cohabitation in a 2-meter × 3-meter cell very difficult at times. I have been denied medical attention for problems with my vision in both eyes, a rash covering much of my body for more than two months, loss of a molar crown, and chronic left shoulder pain. Another prior cellmate infected me with Covid-19, thus landing me for almost a month in a "special" module for quarantined men (cellblock 109). Bugs crawled everywhere, even over my body, the water only worked for two or three hours per day, the toilet was a half cube of concrete, the contents of which splashed out when the air in the line rushed out when flushing after the water was turned back on, trash and used toilet paper were thrown into the corridor, the window could not be closed, allowing cold wind to blow in during the southern winter months of late June and July, were just some of the "benefits" of this horrible cellblock.

I also suffered harassment by first gendarme Rigoberto Castro Z., who, on several occasions, forced me to clean the yard bathroom and shower facilities (once in my pajamas), threatening to assault me on the street once I was set free. The same man abused his authority, putting me in a cage open to the weather for nearly four hours as punishment when I had Coronavirus and a temperature around 39°C (near 102°F). After this, Dr. Venegas diagnosed me as having pneumonia, too, and kidney stones. This doctor visited me once every six days, gave me pain medication and something to reduce my fever, along with antibiotics for 13 days. The fatigue was so bad that I could not get out of bed. I was clearly the sickest of the 60 prisoners isolated in module 109. I could hardly eat. I often checked my temperature; for several nights, it exceeded 39°C.

I was alone in the cold and darkness, and for a few nights, I literally had to tell my brain at times, “activate the lungs and breathe” because breathing ceased to be an automatic physiological function. Whenever I fell asleep those nights, I quickly awoke because I was not able to breathe. I seriously thought, as did the guards, that I was going to die. My condition was so serious that no other prisoner wanted to be my cellmate (until I improved significantly after ten days); I had no one to help me. I was going to die alone, without my wife, without my children or friends. It was a torture chamber, and nobody gave me the option to return to my normal, more comfortable quarters in cellblock 118 or to go to the hospital.

When taking me to 109, Castro did not allow me to take my quilts from my bed in 118. I was so sick that I could not breathe well, walking in the rain with my personal effects. Every 50 meters I had to put down the things I was carrying (plastic chair, clothes, medicines, and foam mattress) in order to rest and then continue the march. Castro cared little about my plight and even seemed to enjoy the show. Never did walking a kilometer, the approximate distance between modules 118 and 109, seem as long as it did that rainy, late afternoon. As if the torture was not enough when we reached the new module, Castro forced me to return to the cage (which was half the distance back toward 118) because the guard at 109 was not there, and Castro’s shift was over. Hence, I waited, caged another two hours, and was again exposed to the cold and rain until another guard arrived to take me once again to 109. While moving my things, two other inmates from 118 helped me take my things a short stretch; but no one helped me head back to the cage. Thankfully, two other infected inmates were also put into the cage with me later, and I gave them a roll of toilet paper in exchange for helping me carry things.

For a moment, I felt like a slave undertaking a forced march under orders from the secret police of a totalitarian European country in the Twentieth Century to some concentration camp. In 109, I was visited once by the public defender and sent messages (via the *gendarmes*) about my condition and problems. I wrote a formal complaint against Castro and mentioned the same to Colonel Palacios, the regional chief, who told me that he was going to investigate.

No one took me to the hospital, even knowing that I have private medical insurance and would cost the *gendarme* administration nothing. The prosecutor and associated lawyers who promoted this charade wherein I was charged with (and eventually convicted for) attempted murder could care less if I died in prison or ended up blind, or if my extensive rash indicated some permanent damage to an internal organ (caused by Covid-19). They were equally cruel in their false allegations, as was the media. Indeed, they would have been happy if I had died in prison or gone blind. I still see thousands of spots or blotches before my eyes.

Yet, these prosecutors will not even allow me to go down to the public hospital or a private clinic to see a specialist. I have been treated worse than an animal for a year, not to mention the inedible *rancho* and *dieta* slop that all prisoners are fed. Such nutrients only serve to feed my diarrhea (noting, too, that I suffer from diverticulosis). My wife is a homemaker who has never worked outside the home, who cares for her 93-year-old father, who suffers from advanced dementia in our home. She not only suffers from the absence of her husband but has had to live off the charity of friends and my son. In addition, complications continue resulting from an accident that cut a tendon in her hand along with chronic uterine pain. Now I have not seen her for seven months.

For the simple act of defending myself against actions that are today considered crimes, I have been abused and living with constant concern for my wife and my children, not to mention, in turn, their concern for me. As the victim of aggression, I was transformed into a perpetrator and subsequently have suffered a lot, being forced to live with criminals for a year, wherein normal contact with my family, friends, and the church is prevented. I harbor no hatred in my heart, but I think I have paid a high and ever-increasing price for firing a shot on a public road in order to repel assailants who wanted to harm me because I wore a reflective yellow vest, I invaded the “territory” of these delinquents, the street, and I was not willing to do what they wanted.

I was afraid that November 10th in Reñaca, without being able to imagine how much more harm I would experience for a year in jail afterward. It would be just if those who falsely accused me were put in the same prison for a year without a salary or contact with their family, friends, and acquaintances. Then they would understand how I have felt.

John went back to reading *Great Expectations* and playing chess with Rubén. Worship services stopped as Aaron said he did not want to attend since doing so gave others cause for making fun of Evangelicals. Upon hearing it, John realized that both Aaron and Ismael had a weak faith. Christians are supposed to fear God more than men and not forsake the assembling of themselves together, according to Hebrews 10:25. The truth is that Aaron and Ismael’s interest was waning. Indeed, even when the three sat alone on the *patio* on the following Monday, there was no interest in talking about religious things. Miami and John had drawn a bit closer since both perceived the tremendous injustice practiced by Chilean courts.

Chapter XX

Do not Marvel at the Matter

On Tuesday, October 20, 2020, Manuel, Arturo, and another *mozo* were paroled and left 118. Cabo Cisternas was in charge of the *módulo* that day and had a good relationship with John. He oversaw the departure of the three happy men. There were only five men out on the *patio* since the rest of the *módulo*'s members worked as *mozos*. Upon waving goodbye to everyone, Arturo left. John wondered if he would really call Jonathan or Felipe and attend the church in Concón. Then Manuel shook everyone's hand and took off. (John shook his hand but said nothing to him.) Earlier, he had asked John to come up to his cell and review the things he had bought; a 1.5-meter shelf hung on the wall, a floor cabinet with an internal shelf and sliding door (of the same length), a bucket with a spigot to take a shower, two extension cords (one with a power strip), an electric floor heater, a few metal hangers, a shower curtain and shelf, a *micrón*, curtains for the door, the bathroom area, the window, and John's bed, a plastic stool, and a bowl with some flatware (Manuel said all the other plates and frying pan had been stolen).

Miami and Rubén suggested that John immediately ask Cisternas to let him change cells in order to avoid things being stolen. Such things were not automatic, and John had no "right" to change cells, but he asked politely, and the *gendarme* told him to wait. "I told you so," said Sergio, "Let me intervene for you." He did so, and within thirty minutes, John was given permission to change cells. He hired Carlos to help him carry stuff from his cell with Delfín and to reinstall his little shelf and light as before, and rehang the bed curtain. Carlos did so and, along the way, suggested that John ask Miami to wash *all* his clothes and bedding in order to not move bedbugs into his new cell. It was a good thing that John complied.

Miami found bedbugs crawling all over his clothes and probably laying eggs everywhere. The critters had obviously made their way across the room from Delfín's infected bed. John's sheets were washed right away so they would dry in time for him to make his bed, and John took minimal clothing back to the cell after inspecting it for bugs. Miami had a huge washing task ahead of him but only had enough detergent for a few items. Unfortunately, Sergio said that neither kiosk had any, so John would have to wait to get most of his clothes back.

John was running short of cash since Cisternas required him (through Carlos, his sycophant intermediary) to "buy him a pack of cigarettes" for 30,000 pesos (USD38), the bribe required for the privilege of moving back to his old cell and, at least for now, to live alone. John complied, of course. He had no problem with efficient black market transactions that improved prisoners' quality of life, and Cisternas was an easy-going guard. The corrupt guards provide certain advantages, and Carlos told John that Cisternas was open for business and would bring in other things, too, for a fee. John arranged to pay Miami on the weekend, who put his hand on John's shoulder and said, "Don't worry about it."

After the trips moving things back were done, John noticed that someone had somehow quickly snuck in and stolen both his extension cords. That stunk. Now he would have to pay Carlos to make him some. All told, other *reos* had stolen about 50,000 pesos worth of the items that John bought from Manuel (that totaled 165,000 pesos). "What can I do?" thought John, who also complained to Aníbal, Carlos, Sergio, and Raúl (the drug trafficker), "I do nothing to these

people, so why do they harm me? What do they have against me?” There would be a lot of extra expense, but John was happy as he lay in bed alone without noise or hassles from a cellmate, and without bedbugs!

Although he did not get much reading done, he did play six games of chess with Rubén (who even managed to win one again due to a silly mistake by John). Soon John would be back peacefully working on stuff to help his case and public image. That was worth spending some money on. Marcelo, the mostly bilingual *mozo* next door who had lived in Australia for several years, stopped by to say hello and dropped off a small lemon and three apples. Jana (Nadia) had finally returned to Reñaca to help Pamela with the household burdens and hopefully get her to get her medical examinations done, all of which was a big relief for John. She had been prohibited from traveling due to the Coronavirus quarantine.

Meanwhile, Chile was once again suffering from intense communist, socialist, and criminal violence, just like it was the same time last year with, among other things, two historic Roman Catholic churches being burned to the ground in Santiago, another in La Serena, and many stores being callously looted.

The next morning, at 7 a.m., John was awakened by a bedbug moving around behind his right ear. They were not gone! He smashed it and wiped the bloody remains on a piece of toilet paper, which he showed to Miami, Aaron, and Rubén on the *patio*. The atmosphere hence turned into a minor uproar, almost as energetic as when the rat hunt was on. How could Delfín and others live with such insect infestation? John had been horribly contaminated, obviously. He hung his blankets out again, but not the sheets, since Miami said the residual chlorine from yesterday probably kept them away.

It was an overcast, very cool spring day, so there was no sun to dry much of anything until after the *reos* went back to their cells. So, Miami and John beat the hanging quilts with a mini oar in the hope that any remaining bugs would go. Earlier, when watching Miami working with John’s pile of clothes submerged in a trough of chlorinated water, John felt something biting his right ankle under his sock. Sure enough, it was another bedbug, which left a hideous bloodstain when smashed. Then the pandemonium alluded to previously broke out wherein John was treated like a leper for a while.

John grabbed some of his clothes off the rack that had been drying since the day before and stripped down to nothing in the barber’s room before carefully putting on the washed clothes and making sure he and they were bug-free. Miami threw the infected clothing in a bucket with extra chlorine, letting it soak overnight to eradicate any bugs. The rest went floating in the trough. A couple of tiny, squirming worms floated up, as did seven baby bedbugs and five or six full-grown ones.

With all the ruckus, John only managed to read one short chapter and play one game of chess. There was some productive activity, however. John spoke with Miami about how “benefits” worked in the prison system, which included Sunday and weekend release several months prior to one’s parole, and working at a CET (akin to a halfway house) with substantial liberty. Those things all required one to sign and thumbprint a recognition of guilt statement that the courts and *gendarmes* could use to show that one’s imprisonment had been just and could be used as

evidence against any future appeals or lawsuits. Most men would soon be back anyway, once again contributing to the income stream of those who benefitted from their *encarcelación* and enslavement. All of this also required many months of work with “very good” bimonthly conduct, as opposed to good, normal, mediocre, or bad conduct scores.

Miami said he would never declare himself guilty of a crime he did not commit and therefore opted for a benefits program that reduced his sentence by two months for every twelve months of “very good” conduct, without having to sign any incriminating statement. The award was made each November, and the initial year’s reward would be granted so long as six months of very good conduct was recorded. Hence, a ten-year sentence could be reduced by twenty months, so long as the *machucado* had a notarized high school or college diploma on file or passed a high school equivalency exam while in prison.

If the conduct score was downgraded for any single month, the benefit for that year was lost, and recouping “very good” status would be gradual, upgraded one step per month of very good conduct, for instance, bad to mediocre one month, mediocre to normal the next month, etc. Miami said to John, “The *gendarmes* and others in the system do not like to make it easy for innocent people like us to go early since they know we will not be back, and the loss of revenue will be permanent.” John figured all this was good information to be thinking about should he be convicted, as expected, at the conclusion of the appeals process in January 2021.

In the meantime, Carlos had installed a couple of electrical switches and extension lines and a new triple outlet in John’s cell. The cost was 30,000 pesos for materials plus 5,000 pesos for labor. The *mozo* living with Marcelo next door was obnoxious and played his Latin beat music so loud that it annoyed John. Such is prison life around *machucados*. Sergio had told John and Rubén that he was trying to get John moved upstairs where there were few common, thieving, disrespectful *machucados* serving as *mozos*. That would require unbolting and moving John’s furniture and his electrical installation, which apparently could be done.

Sergio was still working on getting John’s new phone and external keyboard in by Friday, for 200,000 pesos. The friendly, corrupt *gendarme* would bring it in to Sergio and not know that it went to John, thus making it harder for the *paco* to steal it a few weeks later, which might have been what happened to John’s last phone (after the lieutenant saw him using it). It would allow him to connect to the internet better and participate in historic Baptist Zoomcasts, as well as listen to podcasts and write his daily entries and articles better. Rubén broke his phone and needed a new one, too. He asked John to lend him his present backup phone once the new one came in. Sergio asked John to let him try out the Huawei chip adapter drawer he had taken out of his stolen phone, rendering it unusable for the thief.

Sergio’s Samsung chip adapter/carrier drawer was broken and looked to be the same size. John reluctantly complied, but only after Sergio had given him his word that he would not give the thing to the guy who stole his phone. “Why am I trusting a criminal?” he thought. He reckoned that he owed Sergio something for helping him get back to the non-bedbug-infested cells, and maybe upstairs, plus get a new cell phone with a keyboard. Nothing was ever certain in jail, and men frequently had to take some risk in order to live better.

That evening, John enjoyed his wife’s prepared chicken breast and cheese baked in the little-

used electric oven he bought from Aníbal for 60,000 pesos a few days earlier. Such creature comforts come in handy in otherwise horrendous conditions of frequent annoyance and loss.

In terms of John's ongoing legal battle, he was sending text and audio files that provided the truth of what happened, and many of his supporters were spreading them around social media and on live YouTube channels. That kept him well occupied and kept his mind off his otherwise doleful existence.

The following morning John awoke to scratch ten new bites on his right hip and back, two next to his belly button, and three near his Adam's apple and left clavicle bone. The little demons were still not gone. Miami at first inspected them and determined them to be an allergic reaction. However, as the day went on, it became clear that Miami was mistaken. John was getting fed up with the nuisance and threw all his clothes, sheets, and slippers into the chlorinated was for Miami to wash, then once again hung his quilts and bedspread out. The sun came out after a few hours to help bleach and dry things. Nearly every line and clothes rack were full of John's clothes and jackets. It was a good thing that so few *reos* were on the *patio* those days; otherwise, line space would have been at a premium. John decided to bring one of his two foam mattresses down to bake in the sun in case it was infested.

After a couple of hours, Miami came in got the dining area, where John had been reading and wiping Rubén out in six games of chess, and declared, "The mattress has bedbugs in the seams; I threw it out." Not wanting to take further chances, John brought down his other mattress and the one from the bunk below and left them to bake in the sun outside. He was given a new mattress by Aníbal and told not to take the plastic off until he was sure that the bedbugs were gone. By now, the only things that had not been rewashed or replaced were John's quilts, although they were hung out, and a visual inspection showed them to be clean. So, the experiment would continue another night.

Moroni also came into the dining room, and John, thinking he should bless his enemies, offered him some whole wheat bread from the supermarket (instead of the white bread from prison). He did not want any but afterward tried to strike up a conversation with John both there and sitting out in the sunshine. He asked John how many books he had read and how long to read *Great Expectations*. He tried John's prescription glasses on, too, in order to see if they would work (and did not). He then counseled John to try to get assigned to Casablanca prison since it was more laid back. The trouble is that one usually has to be serving a sentence of less than three (possibly five) years to be assigned there, certainly no longer than ten. John was looking at many more years. He also asked if he could be extradited and go to the United States, but John let him know that he had renounced his citizenship there. Finally, he offered to buy John some anti-bedbug Raid next time he was out getting kidney dialysis. John had no spare cash with all the recent expenses and so took a raincheck till next Tuesday. Moroni's change in attitude was curious.

So was Aníbal's. He called John over for a private conversation in the barber room to let him know that he had found a phone assumed to be John's in the trash pile left when Manuel moved out. Due to some logic akin to finders keepers, the property right to the phone was now his. It was very suspicious since Aníbal had made the *caleta* where John was hiding his phone. But he insisted that he had not stolen it, blaming Manuel. He now wanted John to give him 50,000 pesos

to return the phone to him. John had taken out the chip adapter/carrier drawer, and someone had tried to cram the same drawer that Sergio had shown John into the phone. Sergio had lied. He did not need it for his own phone but rather for Aníbal's. Aníbal told John that he had found several phone chips and incense or toothpick wood inside wherein people had been trying to create a makeshift chip holder. John said he would think about the offer and get back to him.

About twenty minutes later, Aníbal returned and called John over for another private chat, where he pulled out the phone. John confirmed it was his, and then he glued the case back together with some super glue borrowed from Moroni and turned it on. It turned out that the Huawei operating system was smart and required John's Google password and a Wi-Fi connection to reset the phone to factory settings. Aníbal did not have that either. What he had was nothing. Only John could possibly make the phone work again, no matter what Aníbal claimed to the contrary about getting parts from town to make it work.

"So then," mused John, "do I pay off the extortioner in order to keep the peace with 118's *mozo*, tell him no, or offer him less, say 20,000 pesos?" He had offered Sergio a week earlier a finder's fee of 20,000 pesos for anyone returning his phone. And maybe he would not need the new phone slated to arrive the next day with the corrupt guard, although it did not have great connectivity and only slightly surpassed the backup in functionality. Aníbal had a lot of control over where John got to live and with whom, so he figured the latter option might be best. He had the phone from Aníbal to try out and found that it was not going to be easy with the poor internet connection to restore the phone. That uncertainty would be the excuse he used for paying less. Perhaps Aníbal did not steal it, or maybe he was working in cahoots with mendacious Sergio and Manuel, who he knew to be a thief since he refused to give back John's 18,000 pesos.

Having to deal with bugs and extortion were just more examples of the hell that defined John's place of residence, even if 118 was much better than other módulos. Speaking of such alternatives, *Rufo* had contacted John, saying he was living alone now in a cell in 105 and wanted to know if he would move in with him. John declined in the nicest terms but reflected that while he cost John a lot, he got good service, much better than what Mauricio or Manuel provided. Living alone never looked so good to John, so long as he was not sick and had a working cell phone. His live interview on YouTube the night before had been a great success.

The bugs had stopped biting by Sunday, October 25, 2020, but the leftists did not. No doubt under their sway, in a unanimous decision, John was sentenced to eleven years, three days in prison in an incredibly arbitrary decision that did not take into account any of the five mitigating factors presented, other than John's clean criminal record. Guillermo was quite peeved by the errant judgment and was keen to appeal it. The public defender's national office was too, and John was now to be assigned the best legal team they had in Chile to take his case directly to the Supreme Court. "The judges in Viña del Mar," said Guillermo, "are all too contaminated to render an objective and impartial decision." That sentiment ran counter to his original opinion of the three judges, John recalled. Guillermo had certainly been wrong. He was most surprised by Claudio Correa, a judge known to be from the political right.

One had to wonder whether the center-left President Sebastian Piñera, masquerading as a rightist, had called and applied pressure on Correa and the others. At any rate, the sentence decreed was as bizarre as the conviction, without taking relevant evidence and mitigating factors into account,

such as cooperating with the police investigation and setting up a fund with the court for 900,000 pesos to compensate Ahumada for his leg injury. So the intermediate appeal for a retrial at the same level was going to be skipped in hopes of getting a fairer hearing from the Supreme Court in Santiago.

John and Pamela were pessimistic still; that court was purported to be dominated by biased, leftist judges, according to their friend Hermógenes Pérez de Arce. Many *gendarmes* expressed their consternation or sorrow over the biased sentence. One of them, Cabo Mario Salas, suggested that John consults with his attorney about going on a hunger strike (with daily weigh-ins at the prison infirmary) to protest the extreme sentence. He said he had seen such strikes work before to shave years off an unjust sentence. (Salas was an Evangelical who had been given a copy of John's book *Bible and Government*.) Guillermo said it would not work.

An officer told John that after he was finally condemned in January 2021, he might stay in 118 or be sent to 103 where the Evangelicals were and that he could petition to be sent to the less dangerous prison in Casablanca instead. For John, all of those options sounded bad. So did the political storm brewing outside. That same day, 78% of Chileans voted to start a constituent-based process of writing a new constitution for the country. The vote represented a clear repudiation of the military government's once widely received constitution and its free-market economic reforms. Now, post-2022, Chile was poised to revert to a variety of hard-core socialism that it had not experienced in fifty years.

All the good accomplished for decades that made Chile the most prosperous country in Latin America, with very significant poverty reduction and a burgeoning middle class, was about to come tumbling down. Water, copper, and other minerals would quite possibly all be nationalized. Abortion would be legalized and special provisions or rights given to homosexuals, for gender identity concerns, and to disenfranchised indigenous people and other groups. Chile's world-renown private pension program would end, to be replaced by a pay-as-you-go socialist Ponzi scheme model. To John's way of thinking, the vote spelled the end of the Chilean "miracle" and experiment with liberty. His wife saw the writing on the wall, too, and both began considering an exit strategy once John could be delivered from jail.

John also received much encouragement from 118's inmates, many of whom claimed to likewise be suffering unjustly. The most surprising was Ismael, who told John that his girlfriend committed suicide, but he was unjustly condemned twenty years for her murder, based solely on the evidence that he had a 0.3 nitrate residue reading on his hand. Never mind that he was a *carabinero* (police officer) who carried a gun regularly. She left no suicide note but did call someone, whose court testimony was ignored, and another person (a Peruvian) who could corroborate what happened never made it to court. So Ismael got shafted.

Otherwise, the dull life went on in 118. John pushed the backflow of water out of the poorly constructed *patio* bathroom-showers, read his book, listened to Raúl (the younger, drug trafficker) harp on how poorly Guillermo had represented him when he was convicted and sentenced to ten years, talked with Miami about sinister and broken nature of the Chilean judicial system, and wiped Rubén out six times in chess. Carlos and Aníbal finished repairing the frame of the ping pong table. The rest lived yet another day's seemingly meaningless existence.

Pamela and Nadia had still failed to get money and prescription medications to John, with their attempt in the *encomienda* bag (70,000 pesos) ending up being stolen. Pamela blamed Manuel for tipping off the *pacos* or *reos* who stole it. It had been a frustrating weekend, to say the least. Meanwhile, John's friends, son David, and wife had been stepping up measures to improve his public image and show how unjustly he had been treated. Everyone was angry, sad, and disappointed, to say the least.

Chapter XXI

For What Is Your Life?

Ecclesiastes 9:12 says, “For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are shared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them.” That sentiment pretty much summed up the pessimism, disappointment, and simmering anger John felt from the injustice he was served, and despite smashing both Rubén and Ismael in another fourteen games of chess over the last few days, the reality of his doleful life weighed upon him. He was not depressed, although he would readily tell you that he would rather be dead than live in 118 or any other prison. He just missed his regular job and seeing his wife, kids, and friends. He missed having normal computer access, driving his vehicle, traveling, and going to church. He did find some fulfillment in learning Italian, reading books, and writing books from jail. And cell phone communication and text messaging was a huge boon for him. He further planned to start teaching with Valentín again immediately (twice a week) with the Historic Baptists Zoomcast. He hoped that along with Valentín, his wife, his son David, and friends Joe and Eric, he might also be able to have a small publishing company to translate, print, sell, and distribute his newest books. He would also participate in online libertarian shows as he did beforehand.

Such things would help John find a greater purpose in life. In 118, he enjoyed his talks with Miami about their travels to Italy (a mutual retirement destination) and elsewhere, but especially when Miami commented on the Chilean judicial system racket. For instance, he noted that (due to the Coronavirus pandemic), any Chilean could request a 500,000 peso transfer payment from the state by declaring online (filling out a form without proof) that he had lost 30% or more of his income. Many Chileans had done so, including prosecutors, expert witnesses, psychologists, lawyers, and others in the penal system. Trials and incarcerations were way down due to Covid-19 quarantines, and those very-high-income earners had apparently been qualifying for the transfer payment. John was an eager listener considering the injustice to which he had been exposed.

Miami also liked to give his opinion about the chess games going on, even though he was not even good enough to beat Rubén. He mainly liked to talk. Aaron would watch the games without comment, although he had no interest in learning to play. He was more fascinated by Ismael teaching him to play poker.

John noticed that the little trough hooked up on the dining area ceiling by Silva to permit the water dripping in from above to be carried away to the outside drainage system. He was somewhat surprised that it actually still worked, unsightly but effective. John had designs, too, on draining away foul and mendacious reports about him through a team effort trying to influence public opinion through social media and newspaper, radio, and television outlets, albeit largely without success so far.

The medications arrived that his wife and Nadia had left with the *gendarmes*, but the 70,000 pesos they stuck in the lettuce container was stolen. So, they sent a total of 120,000 pesos in envelopes (40,000 pesos weekly maximum) to John, Miami, and Carlos, through the *gendarme* service window. That worked. Accordingly, John’s debts were then paid off, and he had some

spending money left over for food, Raid, and cleaning supplies. He had no bread, however, since it was confiscated once they inspected the *encomienda* bags and found prescription medications stuffed in between slices. At least for the time being, John was still living alone with few responsibilities. He and others were focusing on generating better publicity for him. So far, the results had been lackluster, but they, nonetheless, represented a step in the right direction.

Like Miami and his girlfriend, John and Pamela were also pointing to Italy as a relatively better place to live given the injustice, communist and criminal wanton behavior (still going on), and political problems in Chile. John was reading up on Italian jails since he had a right to serve his time in that country due to the Strasbourg Convention, a treaty (No. 112) signed on March 21, 1983, formally called, "Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons." Chile was a signatory, along with Italy and other European countries. As soon as Italy made the request, John could be transferred there from 118. Italian prisons were not great, from what John and his daughter Rachel had read, but they did have hot water, phone calls, and let people work regular jobs outside of prison and contribute to pension schemes. Prisoners have much larger cells, too, among other benefits, like access to libraries, purchasing newspapers and magazines, receiving instruction about the Italian language. The process might take one or two years, but John set his sights on being transferred to Italy at some point, no longer having much confidence in Chilean justice, even at the highest levels, and certainly finding that Chilean prisons left something to be desired.

After beating Rubén four times in chess the following day, John made a mistake and a victorious Rubén, raising his arms to heaven, exulted in a rare victory, which seemed to wipe away the five earlier losses, not to mention the losses in recent days. Ismael also won a game after John inadvertently let him take his queen. He took the victory in stride without celebration or running around the *patio* (like Rubén) and gloating, telling everyone about his feat. Ismael had lost two games earlier, besides many others in recent days. Maybe John was bored, tired after so many games in a day, or simply too focused on what he left off reading prior to the matches.

His case was likely weighing on him subconsciously, too. The 190-page written opinion of the judges in John's case reached him, along with his family and friends, who were looking it over. The judges clearly wanted to hear John's testimony and held his choice to remain silent against him, had rejected all his expert witnesses, and had gone against medical, legal, and police experts who said it was a ricochet that hit Ahumada. They instead believed the testimony of four young liars who contradicted clear video evidence about John and Ahumada's whereabouts when the shot was fired. They did not even mention the fact that John was clearly threatened and attacked, nor all his mitigating circumstances in sentencing besides prior irreproachable conduct (e.g., cooperating with the police, payment for damage or injury caused, etc.).

Most of the technical expert testimony about chemical residue, fabric burns, etc., was ignored. Shockingly, the 40-caliber round was accepted as being far more deadly and dangerous than a 9mm round, indicating John's desire to commit murder. John was dumbfounded by such ignorance in judgment. The yellow vest was used to show that John had an intention to murder someone, too, incredibly. In short, the decision was bad and formed a basis for an appeal to discard it and go to trial again to review either the ruling or the sentence. Guillermo and others were working on it. The judges accepted so much nonsense that contradicted the video evidence that John did not know what to think. There was either negligence or tremendous bias, and John

suspected the latter.

Tuesday, November 3, 2020, was Election Day in the United States, but it was a duty-assigning and cellchanging day in 118. Cabo Cisternas announced during the roll call lineup that he would be in charge of 118, at least temporarily. Consequently, he would be assigning conduct scores at the month-end. Everyone who was not a *mozo* had assigned cleaning duties: Aaron and sometimes Ricardo cleaned up and looked after the disabled men and worked on projects requiring tools, Ismael and Carlos dealt with taking out the trash and cleaned the barber room, Rubén kept the dining area clean and gave out breakfast, Miami did a little bit of everything, and John swept the accumulated gray water out of the *patio* bathroom-showers and was in charge of keeping the patio swept (although others were expected to help). Carlos also cleaned up around the now-former *en tránsito* area (which was now moved to *módulo* 108), Ismael swept the trash off the roof covering the dining room entrance, Miami kept the garden and *bodega* in order and brought breakfast to the disabled folks. Sergio, Carlos, Aníbal, and Raúl (the younger trafficker) had cleaning duties within the main building. Ismael alerted John that he had overheard the latter group talking with Cisternas about John reading too much and doing too little cleanup. He and Aaron counseled John to make a pass at the bathroom and patio (if needed) a few times a day in order to make him look good. John planned to do just that.

Then John got the bright idea to offer Cisternas thirty to forty-five minutes per day of free English lessons instead of doing such stringent cleanup. At first, Cisternas did not like the idea (since no one could be exempt from cleaning duties), but as he thought more about it, he said he would mull it over. John suggested that he could still do some cleaning but not be held to such strict standards if he was mainly the English teacher. The young *paco* got nothing personally out of *reos* cleaning up, but English was a different story. John would like to get the “very good” conduct mark every month. So John would wait and hope for the best.

After a while, Cisternas came back to John and said he wanted to go to America, perhaps permanently. He had been offered a chance to go to Tulsa and asked John for advice, who reminded Cisternas of his various degrees and experience that warranted him teaching and consulting rather than wasting such talent on cleaning duties (for which he had no comparative advantage whatsoever). He also broached a bigger issue: he was a writer who had completed eleven books (to Cisternas’ surprise) and remarked that *suboficial mayor* González used to help the *reos* get what they needed. “Like what?” Cisternas said. “Like a cell phone with a large screen and external keyboard,” John replied, also noting that he just wanted to use it to communicate and to write and that he had no interest in drugs or other illicit items.

Cisternas, to John’s relief, said he would see what he could do. One of John’s overseas friends had just offered to pay a guard monthly to give John privileges and tranquility. Perhaps it would come to just that. A hundred dollars a month could go a long way in such situations, although everyone had been on the lookout lately.

Sergio said Silva was now in charge of searching *gendarmes* as they entered the prison every day, and a couple had been fired for bringing in drugs. Thus, he did not think the new cell phone he promised would come in prior to January. Sergio had also told John, while he was continuing to pound chess opponents, sometimes eight times a day, including newcomer *rancho mozo* Luis, although had (shockingly) lost a few times and drew twice over the last thirty matches, that he

was working a deal to move John up a floor to cell number 12, away from the *flaite* thieves who played obnoxious *regatón* music very loudly. Sure enough, Cisternas called John back in to swap cells with two lowclass *rancho mozos*. Sergio talked him out of his plan to charge John to keep living alone, for the time being, although John made sure Sergio knew that he was willing to pay for the privilege.

Cisternas was a right-winger who greatly sympathized with John for being unjustly imprisoned after defending himself. He was a good-natured guy and was apparently just corrupt enough to help John get what he needed. Complying with the directive, John hired Carlos to help him move his stuff, including the recent electrical installation and all the items he had bought from Manuel.

Nothing could be reinstalled the same day (like shelves and electrical wiring and sockets), so John would have one uncomfortable evening and night. He cloroxed everything and got preliminarily settled in as best he could. The toilet was bad, one of those under the sink varieties, but the internet connection was far better than what he had with Delfín, Mauricio, or Manuel. So overall, the move was tiring and irksome but a net positive.

Cisternas and the *mozos* were happy, too, since all the *domésticos* and unscrupulous *rancho mozos* were now together on the same first floor of cells (that is, the second floor). John no longer had to put up with the *regatón* vibrating his bunk or having his dishes, utensils, and even chocolate stolen during the day while he was down on the *patio*.

There were other pressures, too. John had been driven to tears by his wife's cruel and sinful comments the night before, such that he longed to die and prayed that God would take away his life. Yet the next day, God was gracious to bring him some improvement in his living conditions, despite Pamela's nastiness when asked to consider to sell assets and to prepare for a possible yet loathsome move to Italy. She was understandably unhappy for the life upheaval, but a change was likely inevitable given the hard Left and communist uprising that was sure to lead Chile into chaos and disaster—none of which was John's fault. She just wanted him to be there to help her with such a move, and the fact that he was not there was his fault.

The deadline to file an appeal with the Supreme Court in John's case was less than twenty-four hours away, and Guillermo assured John that they were working on getting it written up. John hated waiting to do things until the last minute, adding to his nerve-wracking day. He left a letter appealing to the Italian Ambassador for help in Pamela's hands, hoping she would come through and get it sent off. Meanwhile, a couple of Canadian libertarians had come through to shore up John's financial support and Supreme Court appeal, and a few Chileans offered their advice on adding a private big-shot Supreme Court attorney to the defense team.

The stresses on John from his case, Italian connection, cell move, dealing with a new cell boss' requirements (and finding out what he was willing to do for him), and his presently terrible, disloyal, and unsupportive wife were considerable. Once again, it was several of his close friends and son David who rose to the occasion and provided John the encouragement, spiritual and emotional support that he desperately needed during such a trying time.

The next day, Carlos put up John's large shelf and hooked up his outlets and three lights. Aníbal cut the bars on John's bed so he could stretch out his legs when sleeping. Carlos would have to

return the following day since there was so much work to do in order to make the new cell livable. The cost of changing cells again would be substantial by prison standards. Hopefully, someone he knew on the outside would step up and cover it. People had been so generous with John and Pamela that it came as no surprise that a faithful giver covered the cost the next day.

John cleaned up the dust as best he could and put his food and books away. He had a chance to try out a new cell phone that Sergio was trying to sell him for 120,000 pesos. It worked better than his present one but was still lacking, being two to four years old. He had a couple of ham and cheese quesadillas, took a nap, and watched to see which “worker of iniquity” or power broker would win the U.S. presidency. At least his evening would be slightly more comfortable. He still had not figured out why he had been so careless in giving away his queen today and losing again, after winning four games beforehand and one afterward.

John’s case had to be appealed this same day before midnight, and Guillermo said he was working on it. It made John nervous to wait until the last minute to handle such an important matter. He also consulted with former attorneys Fabiola Garcia and David Zúñiga about the filing, and David seemed a bit worried, too. He had abandoned John earlier without a word, apparently due to health problems, and had now reappeared and had been showing interest and making some relevant comments. John had not heard whether Pamela had sent off his letter for help to the Italian ambassador. He reflected on Thomas Paine’s famous remark, “These are the times that try men’s souls.”

She had, in fact, sent it, and they now awaited the Ambassador’s reply. Perhaps he would send the proconsul from Valparaíso to visit John in 118 again, like last year. What was really nerve-racking was waiting for Guillermo (now working with famous head attorney Claudio Fierro Morales, a socialist but the best public defender in the country) to file the appeal with the Supreme Court. It had to be in by 11:59 p.m. on November 4th. He finally filed the 56-page brief at 11:46 p.m. Talk about cutting things close! Once filed, the appeal was declared admissible on November 5, 2020, but John did not receive the notification until nine days later.

The two attorneys argued for a new trial, and rightwing lawyers David Zúñiga, Pablo Larredonda, and Fabiola Garcia thought they did a fabulous job doing so. They showed how John’s legal option to keep silent was used against him, that technical evidence for chemical residues, etc. was ignored, that a non-homicidal ricochet was involved despite the testimony of the four lying witnesses related to the Ahumada injury (which was highly prized by the lower court), that the violent circumstances wherein John found himself were ignored, as were the mitigating personal circumstances related to the incident, critical elements involved with John’s response to being attacked. The reflective yellow vest he wore did not indicate an intention to murder anyone, nor did he illegally transport his pistol nor improperly buy ammunition for his guns a few days prior. He might be guilty of injuring Ahumada accidentally, but he never had any intent to kill him or Molina (whose radiator and gearbox was evidently struck by a ricochet). John fired dissuasively only *after* he was attacked. Furthermore, John thought he had just as much right to be on the public street as the crowd did, wearing whatever he chose. Why should he be expected to flee? David also added that there was a legal question to be heard about setting independent sentences for overlapping crimes.

The whole thing was a ridiculous nightmare. Yet John would have no choice but to wait in 118

for a few more months, where some changes were abrew. On November 6th, the three male commandants and two female majors in charge of the prison paid a visit to 118, smiling and greeting John in the dining room, and asking about his reading book, *En Defensa de los Más Necesitados*, written by his Argentine university colleagues Alberto Benegas Lynch and Martin Krause. He had not seen either man in years but knew them to be libertarians who liked Austrian economics and who criticized the welfare state and market failure theory. He told the *gendarme* officers a bit about the book. Then they chuckled in agreement upon hearing John say that he was a victim of leftist-biased justice and that it was ridiculous that an uncontrollable ricochet could be intended to murder someone. Obviously, all the right-wing top brass was on good terms with John. So were the younger *gendarmes*, whose only criticism of John was that he did not shoot to kill the scoundrels.

Like Cisternas, Cabo Necusman (of Mapuche Indian origin but very anti-communist) wanted to go to the United States and thus asked John to teach him English. He was in charge of 118 for the next few days, and so the two spent an hour together in the morning and another in the afternoon (after most *reos* were locked up) doing English lessons. He wanted to give John something for his effort and asked him to keep any deal made strictly confidential between them (not telling other prisoners or *gendarmes*). John said he wanted to be relieved of any cleaning duties. Necusman said that was no problem whenever he was in charge. John also said he wanted to be left in his cell without any cellmate, which was also acceptable, although he might not have the final word yet (Cisternas still had a lot of authority).

When John asked about bringing stuff in for him, prohibited food items, like peanut butter and bleu cheese, would not be a problem, but a tablet would not be possible at the moment. So that idea was set on the back burner for the time being. He told John, "If you're helping me, of course, I will do what I can to help you." John also mentioned bringing in his medications and cash. John figured he had little to lose by striking up a good relationship with Necusman and building up points. He started calling himself the "*mozo* of English." As time went on, John hoped he could call in some favors. He might well need some. If he could at least be left in peace and alone while finding some way to bring in goods and cash, it would be worth his pedagogical effort.

Nothing was ever fully stable in prison. The officers had visited to verify that they would officially change the status of the *en tránsito* cells to henceforth be used to house up to eighteen *machucados* who qualified for Sunday home visits, where they left jail for the day and came back that evening. A couple of them grabbed the chessboard and played. John observed that they were not very good, although Jorge and Alejandro turned out to be decent players. With all the English teaching, John read fewer pages and only played and won a couple of games of chess himself.

He spent a lot of time explaining how the electoral college and American presidential elections worked, too, instead of his usual routine. The newcomers started rolling in the afternoon, but those men were not the only change in 118. Mujica was paroled, too, leaving just nine of the regular 118 men on the *patio*, soon to be overpowered by up to eighteen rabble from the general population. That fact might have been worrisome if it were not for the fact that the eighteen had to be on good behavior to keep their Sunday benefit going. The bigger risk would be that they bring Coronavirus back into the 118 *patio* with them. John was not much worried about it since he had likely built up sufficient immunity.

There was no progress in his cell remodeling, however, since Carlos had a court date, and then the next day had repairs to do to his cell. He did take John's older (now backup) cell phone under terms that he would manage its rental for 5,000 pesos the first night and 2,000 every night thereafter. He would maintain it and be responsible for it but would earn 1,000 pesos each day it was rented out. He was free to use it himself otherwise. In case John's cell was stolen, he would get the backup from Carlos. Necusman had offered to help John call his family via Skype on his phone or by Facebook on a computer in the *gendarme* offices. But John said that it would have to be at night and that the need was not so great with so many having cell phones. The guard nodded.

John clearly wanted other things over time, like a tablet, micro SD card, and external keyboard that he could write with, along with the aforementioned food, medicines, and cash. A closer friend among the guards was an asset. John gave him some homework and suggested he buy a parallel Bible and attend the English-language Anglican church service in Viña del Mar. It was a good way to learn English, and Necusman was an Evangelical who played the guitar at his church. He had 11 more years of *gendarme* service before he could retire and move to the United States. He expected his English to be passable by then.

John's Italian was improving little by little, and even though he believed that man should not live by bread alone, he noticed that he was running out of food. Thankfully an *encomienda* bag would arrive the next day, and he would have a pizza to eat over the weekend. No wonder why other *reos* wanted to move in with John, who was coming up on his one-year anniversary as a prisoner. Many women were protesting daily outside the prison, not having seen their men in over seven months. Despite all her faults, John missed seeing his wife, too. Hopefully, visitation would start up soon.

Only seven of the eighteen *machucados*, largely rough-looking characters, were transferred to their new quarters in 118A. During formation, Cisternas made sure they knew that 118 was a tranquil place, and no rough stuff would be allowed. One of them, Alejandro, could speak a little English, which he's learned just from watching movies. He spoke to John in the dining room. As noted earlier, he, Jorge, and a couple of others played chess, too. Jorge was about Rubén or Ismael's level, and John beat him handily, just as he did Alejandro; the other two newcomers knew considerably less. But at least there were some more chess players around.

Cabo Necusman came after John was shut in and asked for his lesson in English. He was serious about doing an hour a day, seven days a week. John taught in pajamas, coat, and sneakers. He said he would bring in specialty food items for John and cash from John's wife later down the road, but nothing cell-phone related. Cisternas postponed his English lesson to the next day, so John performed his cleaning duties.

Cisternas saw a pizza box in John's *encomienda saco* and said, "Hey *gringo*, is that a pizza? May I have a slice?" John replied that he could and that he would bring it down in a few minutes after hearing it and putting his food away. John wondered why *gendarmes* asked prisoners for food but were happy to share so long as he got points and perks for doing so.

Aníbal said that visitation would likely begin again in a week or two, as quarantine restrictions were further relaxed. So that was something to look forward to! John's life was improving a bit,

too, as Carlos finished fixing up his cell, with the exception of a couple of small internal hanging cabinet shelves and a board to block air from coming in under the door. Carlos also put in a couple of extra outlets and did a nice job of hanging the curtains. The fixing up took two full *patio* days and thus cost 80,000 pesos, including materials and power tool rentals. Pamela would bring John the money on Monday, so Carlos took 50,000 pesos and agreed to wait for the rest, which came through as planned. John's wife had left the cash owed in an envelope addressed to Carlos and delivered to the *gendarme's* window. She also put 40,000 pesos in an envelope for John directly and another one with the same amount to Miami, who would pass the cash to John.

On Monday, November 9, 2020, John was startled to see Castro walk into the dining room while he was studying Italian. The *paco* who opened the cell doors and dismissed everyone from roll call had left, and Castro replaced him. John was cordial and greeted him, and Castro reciprocated. Soon thereafter, John hid his cell phone amidst his food in the freezer, fearing that Castro would steal it. He did not, nor did he search John or his backpack, and at the end of the *patio* day, John returned to his cell without incident. (Just in case, John had stuck the phone between some leg flab and his scrotum so it would be harder to detect, in case he was searched while climbing the stairs.)

Oddly, neither Cisternas nor Necusman were seen in 118 for two days, and thus no English lessons were given. However, *Rufo* paid a surprise visit, greeting John with a hug and asking if he was all right. He had offered to let John move in with him in 105 since he had a cell to himself, but John had graciously declined the offer, noting that he was fine where he was, also alone in his cell.

The seven Sunday-home *reos* were on the *patio* instead of working, perhaps bringing Coronavirus back with them to the *patio*. More of their kind were supposedly on the way as well. That night, John could hear 118A's door opening and people talking, but there were no new arrivals. Other worrisome elements were stirring, too. John found his chess game to be off; Rubén beat him once on a silly error and tied him once, even though John beat Ismael twice. He did get a little more reading done, and both Miami and Israel were looking forward to borrowing *En Defensa de los Más Necesitados* as soon John could get through the last forty pages, which he did the next day.

John made stellar ham, cheese, avocado, and lettuce sandwiches, which he shared with Aaron and Ricardo, who thought them to be delicious. When not eating or playing chess, John taught bits of public choice and Austrian economics to those two, Ismael, Miami, and Rubén, through casual conversation. John used his extra cell time to write, listen to part of a sermon that Valentín Navarrete sent, prepare his lesson for Thursday's Historic Baptists video conference meeting, and reheat the delicious pork and golden potatoes his wife had sent a couple of days ago. He realized, too, that tomorrow was the big day.

It was November 10th, exactly one year from the day that the investigative police arrested John and put him in their holding cell for the night. It was the day that John began *bearing the cross*, suffering unjustly on account of political bias against him, hyped by the media. He had done nothing wrong in God's sight by defending himself, yet his life was ruined by an ignorant and bloodthirsty wave of public opinion led by a nefarious prosecution team wholly beholden to and driven by evil.

Yet, the story is not over. The coming year would feature a Supreme Court appeal and possible new lowercourt trial. It might also see John (and Pamela) relocated to their primary country of citizenship, Italy, either to serve out his Chilean prison term—and perhaps some abridged sentence—or to live as a free man expelled from Chile and not allowed to return for ten years. He might even see his sentence dramatically reduced, and the corresponding sentence being less than what he had already served if Guillermo and Claudio's argument were accepted. So much now depended on the upcoming trials and how effectively John's supporters could use the facts of the case and John's writing and public statements to alter public opinion. John looked forward to having both his books published soon.

Meanwhile, this story will continue until some resolution is reached. Throughout the year, Pamela and John's needs had been met by the generous giving of family, dozens of friends, and hundreds of other supporters. John was especially touched by the poorer people he knew who gave regularly.

The heartfelt commitment from so many supporters who saw John suffering wrongfully was a great source of joy for both John and his wife. Despite all the hell they went through, there remained reason for hope and that good would triumph over evil. Miami pointed at some buds and future fruit on the male avocado tree, which apparently could have only been caused by mingling roots with the female one in 114. Hence, the tree now had new life and the ability to yield fruit. Life was so dour that even hearing about new plant life made John was like an invigorating breath of fresh air.

Despite all the adversity, John had managed to accomplish a lot. He played 1,247 games of chess with many inmates, teaching Rubén and a few others how to play, winning 92% of the time, stalemating 1.5%, and losing just 6.5%. His overall record was 1,147-81-19. He read (aforementioned in Chapter 10) nineteen books, most of them quite lengthy, plus the entire Bible except for Leviticus and Numbers. He was presently reading *Migrations and Cultures* by Thomas Sowell. He also wrote two books of his own, without a keyboard, and was presently preparing to have them translated into Spanish and published in both languages. He lost a little weight, taught some in the Historic Baptists Zoomcast, preached and taught some inmates from the Bible for many months, learned much about Chilean prisons and the Chilean justice system, learned a lot more Italian grammar and vocabulary, and maintained a leadership role in libertarian political activism through social media communications. His faith and Christian practice remained strong, patiently waiting for God's Providence and deliverance despite his unjust suffering.

It had been a hard, lonely-at-times, depressing-attimes, expensive, and even cruel year. Yet, visitation was rumored to be starting again during the next week or two, which John looked forward to very much. He especially looked forward to seeing his wife again, along with many friends and supporters already planning to come. Perhaps soon, everyone involved would be able to see some light at the end of the tunnel, leading them out of the terrestrial hell that had gripped John and Pamela for what seemed like an eternity. Everyone he knew hoped and prayed that the coming year would in every way be better than the last. It was left to John and others to wait and see how things unfolded.

Appendix

Verses from which chapter titles were derived:

Bearing the Cross

And whoever does not **bear his cross** and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
(Luke 14:27)

Chapter I

All these are **the beginning of sorrows**.
(Matthew 24:8)

Chapter II

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.
(I Corinthians 6:11)

Chapter III

I returned and saw under the sun that—The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But **time and chance happen to them all**.
(Ecclesiastes 9:11)

Chapter IV

What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.
(Ecclesiastes 1:15)

Chapter V

For in much wisdom is much grief, And **he who increases knowledge increases sorrow**.
(Ecclesiastes 1:18)

Chapter VI

Then I turned myself to consider **wisdom and madness and folly**; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?— Only what he has already done.
(Ecclesiastes 2:12)

Chapter VII

A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; **But money answers everything**.
(Ecclesiastes 10:19)

Chapter VIII

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, **and after that they go to the dead**.
(Ecclesiastes 9:3)

Chapter IX

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.
(Ephesians 4:28)

Chapter X

A time to weep, And a time to laugh; **A time to mourn**, And a time to dance;
(Ecclesiastes 3:4)

Chapter XI

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble Is **like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint**.
(Proverbs 25:19)

Chapter XII

By long forbearance, a ruler is persuaded, And **a gentle tongue breaks a bone**.
(Proverbs 25:15)

Chapter XIII

Then they said, "What is the trespass offering which we shall return to Him?" They answered, "**Five golden tumors and five golden rats**, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague was on all of you and on your lords.
(I Samuel 6:4)

Chapter XIV

For **the wages of sin** is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)

Chapter XV

If I ascend into heaven, You are there; **If I make my bed in hell**, behold, You are there.
(Psalms 139:8)

Chapter XVI

My brethren, **count it all joy** when you fall into various trials, (James 1:2)

Chapter XVII

The first one to plead his cause seems right, **Until his neighbor comes and examines him**.
(Proverbs 18:17)

Chapter XVIII

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, **and then the end will come**.
(Matthew 24:14)

Chapter XIX

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, **the devil is about to throw some of you into prison**, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
(Revelation 2:10)

Chapter XX

If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, **do not marvel at the matter**; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

(Ecclesiastes 5:8)

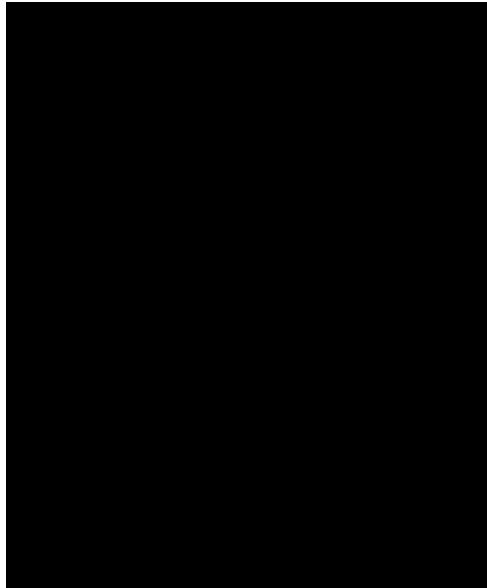
Chapter XXI

whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. **For what is your life?** It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

(James 4:14)

...The shocking and tragic story of an innocent professor and pastor tried and imprisoned in Chile.

About the author



John Cobin received his Ph.D. in public policy and M.A. in economics from George Mason University, and an M.A. in business economics from the University of California at Santa Barbara, plus a B.A. in the same field from California State University, Long Beach. He also has an undergraduate degree in religious studies from Reformed Bible College and some graduate coursework

in the same field from Regent College. He has been a university professor, entrepreneur, consultant, editor, English teacher to non-native speakers, Baptist pastor, and international conference speaker. Fluent in both English and Spanish, he is the author of many books, articles, and letters to the editor, and has traveled to seventy countries, spending many years in the United States and Chile, with significant time in Italy. He is the father of seven children. He lives with his wife Pamela.